NEMESIS?

The story of Otto Strasser

DOUGLAS
REED

author of Insanity Fair and Disgrace Abounding

NEMESIS?

June 18 $3.00

Foremost among Hitler's private and public enemies is Otto Strasser. As the brother of Gregor Strasser, that chief lieutenant of Hitler whom Hitler shot, he has a death to avenge: as a German, he believes that Hitler betrayed the real National Socialism. Strasser's aim is to build a Fourth Reich, founded on a true democracy.

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NEMESIS?

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NEMESIS?

The Story of Otto Strasser

by

DOUGLAS REED

JONATHAN CAPE
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE
LONDON

facing: OTTO STRASSER]

FIRST PUBLISHED 1940

JONATHAN CAPE LTD. 30 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON
AND 91 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN IN THE CITY OF OXFORD
AT THE ALDEN PRESS
PAPER MADE BY JOHN DICKINSON & CO. LTD.
BOUND BY A. W. BAIN & CO. LTD.

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PREFACE

This book is about a German, Otto Strasser; having elbowed myself to the front of the stage in two books, I take the part, in this one, of *compère* — the man who opens the show, is often seen lurking in the wings while it progresses, and from time to time, between the scenes, comes to the front of the stage to remind you that he is there, that he holds the show together, and that it would not be complete without him.

Now that war has come, and the great question which engrossed our thoughts for many years has been answered, new thoughts crowd to the foreground of our minds, and foremost among them, the question, 'What Germany will come of this war?' In the search for the answer to it, Otto Strasser, of whom few people in Britain had heard till war came, becomes a figure of importance.

He may play a great part in answering this question. I say may, because war is less predictable than peace; it is the high-tension cable broken loose, thrashing about in all directions, you never know where, how, or whom it will strike; the switchboard is no longer in control.

Many writers have shown that the events leading to this war, and the war itself, could be exactly foretold: it was their trade, and they were as well able to do this as a doctor is able, from specific symptoms, to foretell the course of some diseases; and Lord Halifax, though he expressed in this phrase the average state of mind of many Britishers, only clothed a fallacy in words that sounded convincing when he once said 'We distrust people who forecast precisely the course of coming events'. This is a useful phrase to justify procrastination and non-exertion, nothing more.

Politics, in peacetime, are an exact science — to those who know politicians. War, 'the pursuit of politics with other means', draws a smoke-screen across the future. But this much I would wager now, at the dawn of 1940: that Germany will not emerge from this war a State ruled in absolute authority by Adolf Hitler and victorious over all enemies. Coming months or the next year or two will bring changes in Germany, and new men will begin to take a hand in the leadership of the Reich. That will not be the end of our troubles — perhaps only their beginning.

Otto Strasser has many qualifications and some chances, if he seizes them. Not many years ago Hitler, enthroned to-day on the lonely peaks of power, was obscure; Otto Strasser to-day is a little-known exile, but before long he may tread the upward path.

After reaching manhood — which for my non-stop generation meant the first outbreak of the present war, in 1914 — I lived longer, at one stretch, in Germany than in any other country, including my own. The study of that strange Jekyll-and-Hyde country, the bane of our times, engrosses me. Some months before the present instalment of the war broke out, feeling that it was certainly coming, I began to think about and read about Otto Strasser, for I believed that when it came that lost legion of the Germans, the exiles, would immediately begin to grow in importance, and among the most important of them was this Otto Strasser. At that time my mind was already browsing on conjecture about the Germany that would succeed Hitler's Germany; but at that time the British public mind did not look so far forward, or this book might have appeared earlier.

When the second outbreak of this war came, his name was, in fact, at once heard, stimulating my interest even more, and an idea became an intention. In evening strolls through subdued, but not blacked-out Paris streets, where shuttered shops showed the way that war, for the third time almost within living memory, had drained the city of its manhood; in quiet meals in Paris restaurants, among elderly gentlemen who wore fine natural tonsures and were accompanied by fur-coated blondes; in long afternoons and evenings of unremitting work in hotel bedrooms I studied and questioned and debated with Otto Strasser, learned of his struggles in the past and his plans for the future.

The result engrossed me and left me with an ungovernable itch to write. Not entirely on account of Otto Strasser's political beliefs and plans; not entirely, even, on account of his personality, though I was happy and stimulated in his company, and got along very well with him, as I often do with individual Germans; but on account of the content of his life, which aroused in me all the instincts of the teller-of-tales and made me impatient for my typewriter.

I lived again, in those Parisian hours, the life of a man of The Other Side; a life far more adventurous than my own, which has not been dull; the life of another man of our raging contemporary times, buffeted by all the winds that blow. A life, to me, far more absorbing than Hitler's life. With and through him, I felt again the pulse of that seething, turbulent Germany that gives us all no rest, of that repellent and fascinating land where I spent many years.

The tale is told in this book. Otto Strasser's adventures and his political thought interest me alike. It is for me a new undertaking to write another man's life and explain another man's mind, for I have so much to say myself. I shall probably have to restrain myself by force from rushing on to the stage from time to time and elbowing the chief player aside. Somebody wrote of an earlier book of mine that my great fault in it was to shake the fist of my personality in the reader's face, and that probably was its chief merit. Nevertheless, short of an apoplexy, I shall achieve some measure of self-effacement this time.

The tale I have to tell is an important one. Hitler has nearly played his part. He long has curdled our blood. He has been like a Silly Symphony Napoleon with a live bomb in his pocket; it was as if the grotesque child of some comic artist's pen had suddenly stepped out of the screen and advanced upon a spellbound audience, firing real bullets from his gun.

A few more melodramatic postures and gestures and harangues, and he will be gone. From the wings already peep the candidates for the succession, chief among them two men: Göring, fat, Falstaffian, Neronic, ruthless, cunning, world-famous; and Otto Strasser, poor, unknown, outlawed, undaunted. They both mean you, just as Austria and Czechoslovakia and Poland meant you. I wrote that in *Insanity Fair* and *Disgrace Abounding*, and it has come true. This is just as true.

Your courage, your resolution, your this-and-that, will not help you if your rulers lose the peace. If they do that, your last state will be worse than your first, the going of the man Hitler will not profit you, your sufferings and your sacrifices and courage in this new war will be in vain, even your victory in it will be in vain, the next twenty years will be even worse than the last. The peace-to-come is even more important than the war, and in your own lives you now have seen what it means to lose a peace, or rather, wantonly to throw away a victory, just from dislike of exertion and of a stitch-in-time, from putting your trust in a burglar out of fear of a bogyman.

This is the importance of the tale that is told in this book.

NEMESIS?

CHAPTER I

DESERTED VILLAGE

I HOMED to England, after many years abroad, in the spring of 1939. I had seen the invasions of Austria and Czecho-Slovakia and, as I came through Poland on my homeward way, clearly saw that that country would be the next victim, and I wrote this in *Disgrace Abounding*. I knew then, and also wrote, that our inevitable dilemma, the dilemma our foreign policy had made inevitable, now lay close before us: either we must go to war with Germany, or we must capitulate and have the Germans in London.

I saw that only a few months would pass before this decision forced itself upon us, and I decided to use that time to look at England, to try and understand the mind of a country that was my own, my native land, and yet was more perplexing to me than any foreign one. I could not begin to understand the slothful scepticism which had defeated every effort to awaken the country to the danger and thus to avert war. I could not understand the fear of exertion which seemed to underlie that state of mind. I could not understand the way the country, on the one hand, passively allowed itself to drift towards an avoidable war, and, on the other hand, permitted an enormous influx of unassimilable aliens whose intention clearly was, when that war came, to burrow into the places vacated by the young men of Britain who would again be sent to fight.

Already, the state of England after the war that loomed ahead was full of menacing shadows, but there seemed as little hope of awakening public opinion to these dangers as there had been of awakening it to the oncoming peril of war itself. The things that were best in England were being buried under an imported, alien way of life and way of thinking that made itself ever more master of literature and the Press, the stage and the films, radio and the menu, art, parliamentary debates — everything.

We were going to war again to keep England's shores inviolate, and at the same time we were opening these shores to an alien influx the like of which they had never seen. Maddest of all, the craziest thing that I ever saw even in the madhouse Insanity Fair, we were about to give these new-comers preferential treatment in our own land over the country's own sons; they were to be put into posts liberated by the young men who went off to war, and at the price of 'joining-up' themselves they could even acquire British citizenship — but the condition of that 'joining-up', set out in black and white, was that they never should be sent to the front! Their lives were to be preserved at all cost, so that they could live in peace and prosperity in England after the war; and simultaneously the lives of young Englishmen were once more to be squandered.

No words are adequate to describe this lunacy. I had seen the thing coming and written this, in *Disgrace Abounding*, and now it had come. Both the things I had foreseen and feared had come — the war, which would take another British generation off to battle, and the alien influx, which would rot the roots of British life still further. It was a cheerless prospect. At that rate, we should not be better off after the war, whether we won or lost it; but for the new comers, it was heads-we-win and tails-you-lose. I had seen them playing with that coin in Berlin and Vienna.

We seemed to have tied ourselves inseparably to a policy of adding one mistake to another. The state of England did not bode well.

So, in that discontented summer, I set out on a series of English journeys, and shall describe the things I saw in another book. To a patriot in search of his homeland, they were not reassuring; rather, they deepened his fears, and after this war, if the same policy be continued, you will see that they were well-founded. These journeys showed me many things, and led me to strange places, and one of these places, where I made up my mind to write a book about Otto Strasser, was the strangest of all.

Turning things over in my mind, I went along a lonely stretch of coast and suddenly came upon Goldsmith's Deserted Village, a weird, spectral place hidden beneath the cliff until you suddenly encountered it.

A ruined inn; roofless and wall-less houses; gaping and shingle-buried streets; an odd flower poking its head through the débris to show where a garden had been; fragments of ancient wall-paper; rusty grates, where fires once had warmed tired fishermen; a chicken or two pecking about; a solitary, tousle-headed woman, with a bright eye and one tooth in her head, who leaned against a wall and watched me as I came. The most uncanny place, where the crunching of my feet on the shingle took on a disturbing and disquieting sound, although the sun was still high.

I saw the longing for talk lurking like an eager dog in the old woman's eye and greeted her, and she gave me a 'Good-day, master', and told me the story, a simple one. This was a busy fishing village and one night came a great wave, the like of which none had ever seen, and just wrecked the village where it stood; nobody had been killed, but the fishermen all elected to have new houses built by the Government in a safer spot, a mile or so away up on the cliffs and out of sight, and so all had fled — all save she.

She chose, she did not tell me why, to have her house rebuilt where it stood and now she had lived these many years, all alone, in the one sound house in that wrecked hamlet. The bathing was good, and in the summer she had a few lodgers; and follow-my-nose sometimes led an odd motorist to her door, to whom she sold a cup of tea, but that was stopped now, because the authorities thought the little road down from the cliff-top dangerous and had put a bar across it, so that follow-my-nose stopped at the top and never scented the ruined village below. And now the war on top of that, and no holidaymakers. And the blackout on top of that.

The blackout! Among these ruins, her one window had shone yellow of nights, spilled its reflection into the waves that nearly lapped her door. Through that window, she could see the great light at the headland a mile distant, that now in war, as in peace, cast its rolling eye for ever round and round, winking to all who wanted to know, British fishing boat and peeping German submarine alike, 'Here I am, Shingle Head; here I am, Shingle Head; Here I am, Shingle Head. . . .'

The light had kept her company. But now she might see it no more, of nights. For although all the visitors had gone, and winter was nigh, and she seldom saw a soul, still the blackout man had been down and told her to douse that light. How the Big Light laughed, when the Little Light, its companion those many years, went out! Now she sat all alone, in her little room in the one sound house in the ruined village, surrounded by those brick-and-mortar ghosts, and had blacked-out her little window. She had not gas-proofed her little room; she was not educated enough for that. But how she hated the blackout.

'Do you take lodgers at this time of year?' I said, when she finished.

'Yes, master', she said wonderingly.

'Well, I'm doing nothing for a day or two, so I'll come in,' said I, 'I have a job of thinking to do, anyway.'

It was a strange lodging. 'Well, stap me and Heil Hitler,' I thought, when I surveyed it. It was nearly as damp as a well, but then, it was not much wider than a church door, and I had been in worse, though not in stranger places.

A good place to think. I thought about the war, and what would come after it, leaned against the breakwater, stirred the shingle with my foot, watched the seagulls. And at night we talked, and how we talked.

We agreed that the fishermen were right; the Big Wave had been caused by the county authorities taking too much sand from the foreshore; hadn't we always said that would lead to no good; we talked about the German cook at the hotel up on the cliff, who had yielded to the entreaties of all who knew her not to leave them because of the war; and we agreed that, all things considered, if it had been us we would probably have gone home, no matter how they coaxed us; and the things we said about the blackout! The old lady celebrated the festival of Saint Garrulous; she liked it.

And so did I, but at last I said, 'I'm going now, I'm going to write a book, about England and Germany, and Göring and Otto Strasser, and how this war is going to end, and what will come after it, and I'll probably come and stay with you again about Christmas, so good-bye.'

'Well, I'm sorry you're going, master,' she said, 'you was good company for me. And are you going to write a book, out of your head?'

'I am,' I said, 'I'm a slave to the habit. Some people can take books or leave them alone, but I'm not like that. I'm like the alcoholic subject, whose next drink is always going to be his last. I'm always full to bursting with *Treppenwitze*.'

'What's that?' she asked.

'The joke you think of after the party, when you're going downstairs', I said. 'The things you wish you'd said. But I have the advantage of those tardy jesters — I always go back and work off my jokes, in another book. None can escape me, and here I go.'

'Well, that's interesting,' she said, raking me with her bright but empty eye, 'good-bye, master'.

I felt that eye in the middle of my back as I walked up the cliff path. At the top I turned and waved. She stood at the door of her house, among the skeletons of the homes of her childhood's friends, and the chickens pecked about her feet.

I took train and ship for France, to seek Otto Strasser. The train dawdled. The ship waited for hours before even setting forth, and as all the cabins were monopolized I spent the night walking the deck. The next day, I was in France, revelling in a glass of Dubonnet, a mouthful of mushroom omelet, a half-pint of Clicquot, a marvellous contrecarrée, a morsel of Brie, a coffee, and a Grand Marnier. O, land of gastronomic perfection, of the art of living.

I strolled awhile about Paris, happy as a sandboy. The streets, for me, were full of the ghosts of the British Army that rolled roaring down from the line in 1918 to celebrate victory. Victory! Holy umbrellas!

I thus took a quick, deep breath of Paris, and then wandered off to Montparnasse in search of Otto Strasser. Eventually I found him in a modest room in a small hotel in a back street.

I had seen men in exile who became kings. I had seen kings who became men in exile. I had seen presidents in palaces and in cheap lodgings. I had seen politicians rise and fall like the bobbing celluloid ball on the water-spray at the shooting galleries. Here was a man who had just missed playing a big part, a man who had called Hitler a fraud when all others were acclaiming him a genius, a man whose time to play a big part again might soon be coming.

I plunged myself into the study of this man, Otto Strasser, and here he is.

Ring up the curtain!

CHAPTER 2

SKETCH FOR A PORTRAIT

THE man whose picture is the frontispiece to this book is Otto Strasser. It is the best one I could find. In others, which I rejected, the photographers gave him the glowering glance, the clamped lips affected by all the dictators of our and other times, the mien of the strong-man-candidate-for-the-succession.

Otto Strasser may be that, but he does not customarily wear that familiar visage. His habitual expression is one of vigour but also of smiling friendliness, and I do not mean that he smiles and smiles, but his natural disposition is a cheerful and hearty one. He has not the inner hatred of life and of his fellow men which is Hitler's driving instinct and which gives Hitler that suspicion-filled, my-hand-against-every-man's, don't-you-try-to-take-a-rise-out-of-me look.

Strasser is much more of a fighter than Hitler; no man could picture him dissolving into tearful self-commiseration at a setback or at the thought that the ultimate enemy of all men, the Marxist Death, cannot be put in a concentration camp; he revels even in a fight that is going badly, though in his heart is an unrelenting hatred of men who owe him a debt written in blood, and if they come into his power they will pay in the coin they took.

But that is not written in his face, because his inner man is not like this, and for that reason the picture is not good. Twenty-five years of struggle, betrayal, disappointed hopes, embitterment, of unflagging pursuit and narrow escape, have not chiselled hatred in his features, as it is chiselled in the features of men who have reached the highest peaks of power. He remains a merry fellow, who lives hard, loves hard, eats and drinks with enjoyment, carries on his one-man war with gusto, never forgets his revolver, has a long score to settle, loves his country, and likes to laugh.

He is the opposite of everything that Hitler is — Hitler the éclair-eater who preaches the spartan life; Hitler the celibate who preaches big families; Hitler the chauffeur-driven and chauffeur-piloted armchair-sitter who preaches sport and physical exercise; Hitler the non-smoker, non-drinker and non-meat-eater who leads one of the heaviest-eating and heaviest-drinking nations in Europe; Hitler who preaches the fight-to-a-finish and orders unbeaten battleships to scuttle themselves. Hitler, who wrote *Mein Kampf*, has known little struggle in his life; he was carried in a sedan chair by an Al Capone bodyguard to the summits of power. Strasser has never stopped fighting, since 1914.

I should call him a typical German — not in the sense in which the term is currently used by Britishers who do not know Germany and who have in mind something rather fat, rather coarse, and over-portentous. The term, a typical Englishman, used by people of the same kind in Germany, also has an uncomplimentary significance; English people would be genuinely startled to know that the German often finds in their physiognomy something that reminds him of the *Raubtier*, the carnivore.

I lived very long in Germany and mean, by a typical German, an inexplicable mixture of good and bad, of staunchness, vigour, industry, thrift, humour, talent; and of brutality, envy and insensitiveness. The Germans, incidentally, have a particularly keen sense of humour, and I often wish that my countrypeople, who almost completely lack this, would learn from them.[1]

A good pointer to the difference between the character of a Strasser and that of a Hitler, who is not typical of any one people but is more unlike the Germans than almost any other race I know, is given by Dr. Hermann Rauschning, once an intimate of Hitler, in his book *Hitler Speaks*, in reference to Gregor Strasser, Otto's brother:

'In Danzig and in most of Northern Germany, Gregor Strasser had always been more esteemed than Hitler himself. Hitler's nature was incomprehensible to the North German. The big, broad Strasser, on the other hand, a hearty eater and a hearty drinker too, slightly self-indulgent, practical, clear-headed, quick to act, lacking bombast and pathos, with a sound peasant judgment: this was a man we could all understand. I had

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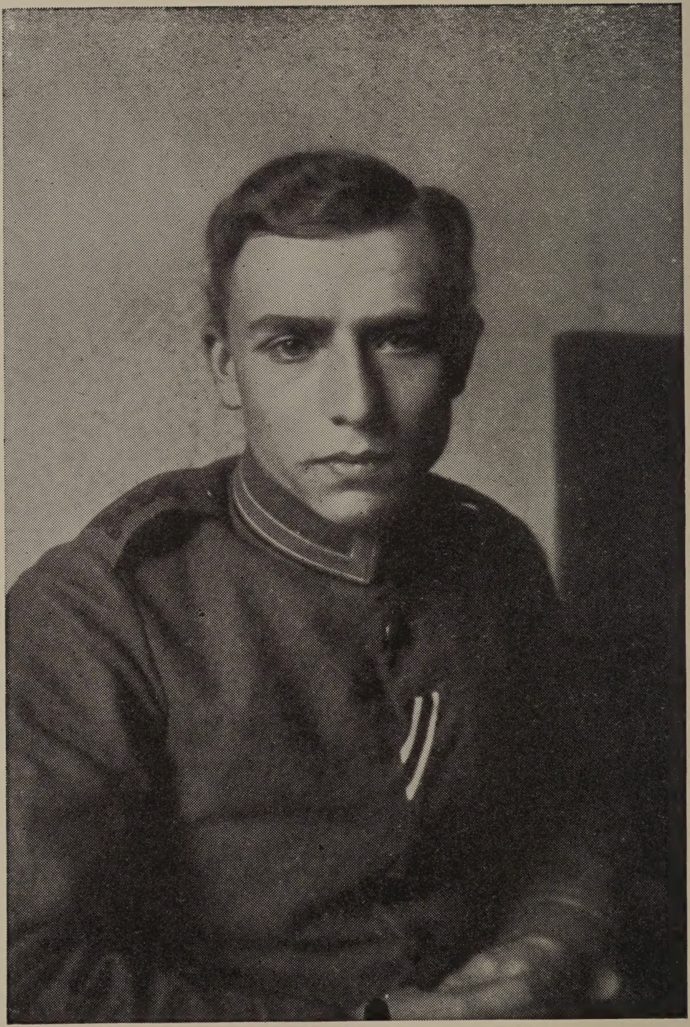
[1] Lady Oxford, writing in the *Daily Sketch* about the time war broke out, gave the perfect example of the British sense of humour and of the difference between these fortunate people, the British, who possess it, and those others who have it not.

She found herself one day – she wrote – seated next to Joachim von Ribbentrop at a luncheon table and said to him inevitably – deary, deary me the horror of this inevitability – 'The fault I have to find with the German race is that they have never had a sense of humour'. Neither Goethe nor Wagner, she added, had possessed one; the only great German writer who was a famous humorist was the Jew Heine. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that Herr Hitler and himself had often rolled on the floor in uncontrollable laughter. 'Had he not said this seriously', remarked Lady Oxford, 'I would have suspected that he was pulling my leg. I said: "And do you really think that *this* shows a sense of humour? I can only say that if any of my children had done it I would have sent them to bed".'



OTTO STRASSER AS A NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER, 1915 been present at the last meeting of leaders before our seizure of power, in Weimar, in the autumn of 1932. Gregor Strasser gave the meeting its character. Hitler was lost in a sea of despondency and accusations on the top of the Obersalzberg. The party's position was desperate. Strasser was calm, and with assurance and quiet confidence, succeeded in quenching the feeling that the party was at its last gasp. It was he who led the party. To all practical purposes, Hitler had abdicated.'

Here you have, also, a good picture of Otto Strasser, for the two brothers were much alike. But for intrigues and stiletto-work that outdid the medieval Italian courts and the gang-wars of Chicago, the Strassers, and not Hitler, might have become the leaders of Germany. Germany would then never have known the orgasms of hysterical, mock-patriotic self-pity and self-applause which she knew under Hitler; but she and Europe would probably have been spared war. The time may be coming soon for Otto Strasser to take up his brother's work.

Otto was a good-looking lad and young man, as the pictures of him in his recruit and officer days will show you. Now he is in his middle age, nearly bald, but filled with that unquenchable energy which astonishes all foreigners, and exhausts many, when they deal with Germans. I am no laggard worker; but after hours and hours of discussion and debate and research and comparing notes, I often had to cry halt when Otto Strasser seemingly was just getting into his stride. I like and admire this terrific energy, which also fills Otto Strasser's greatest adversary and rival, Hermann Göring.

It is some product of the German climate and the German way of life.

Consider Otto Strasser now, as he goes with a quick stride through obscure Paris streets. Average height; rather bulky, rather stocky; a heavyish, German-looking overcoat; a bow-at-the-back, German-looking hat. You would hardly notice him, yet he may force himself on your notice. In the marionette-theatre that is our world, the unseen hand, Destiny, has of late been tugging gently at the strings of this figure, testing them to feel if they are in good condition.

This man alone, among the men who left Germany, *fought*! The exiles dispersed to a score of countries. Some subsided quietly into complete oblivion. Others, and particularly the Jewish exiles, began a deafening war of words. None so bold as they — in the press and radio of Paris and London.

But this man took up the fight, a one-man-fight against Hitler. Whatever he is, whether he become powerful or not, he could with truth and justice write a book of his labours and call it *Mein Kampf* — for this *was* a Kampf. A fight against fog and frost, against police and passports, against secret pursuers and perjured friends, against gunmen and kidnappers, against poverty and vilification, against poison and bullets.

Whether luck and his own qualities will bring him to the place he strives for, I do not know. When I first met him, he was reading a book about Napoleon, and in a more intimate moment I said to him, 'I hope you are not developing Napoleonitis?' which made him smile. He often spoke of the new Germany that he would like to build as The Fourth Reich and, again, I wondered; a good new name is better than a revised edition of a discredited old one. And once he told me that his whole, carefully-thought-out and detailed plan for the structure of that new Reich came to him suddenly and vision-like, and, as we are nearly dying of a surfeit of Hitler's visions, I felt dubious.

But the future is his, to make or miss. His past story is so full of effort and courage that it commands respect and deserves its record. If he reaches his mark, it will pass into history, form the stuff of a hundred biographies. If he fails, it is nevertheless a thundering good story.

CHAPTER 3

THE STARTING GUN

OTTO STRASSER's life really began, like those of most male Europeans born around the turn of the century, with the outbreak of war in 1914. Since its adjournment, in 1918, he has had, as the little boy said, two minutes peace each year. He was carried by it into the vortex of those turbulent years which still hold us captive.

The aspect, to-day, of the quiet family circle in which he grew up is typical of the lot of that generation. His eldest brother, Gregor, is dead, killed by the man he made, Hitler. His second brother, Paul, is a Benedictine monk, until lately in Belgium; life in Germany was made impossible for him and he was fortunate to escape unscathed. Paul's experience is worth recording. After Hitler's advent to power, he took a party of young Germans on a pilgrimage to Rome, was attacked in the press for this, and on his return arrested at the frontier. Being released, he gave his captors no second chance, but went to Austria, and from there, a little before Hitler's invasion, to Belgium.

Otto himself is an exile, outlaw, hunted these many years from land to land. His youngest brother, born ten years after himself, a lawyer by profession, is an infantry subaltern in Hitler's army. His brother-in-law, the husband of his younger and only sister, is a colonel in that army. Gregor, Paul and Otto all served as officers in the 1914-18 war.

THE STRASSER FAMILY CIRCLE

Otto is on the right, Paul on the left, Gregor is not shown

Otto Strasser was born on September 10th, 1897, at Windsheim in Bavaria; nine years earlier, Adolf Hitler was born not far away, at Braunau, just across the Austrian frontier. Yet a world of difference separated these two men. To understand a man, you need to know his roots. No man can trace Hitler's roots. The roots of Otto Strasser were three: a deep German patriotism, an inherited religious feeling, and strong Socialist convictions, partly inherited.

These three things made the grown man. Patriotism was fostered by the country of his birth, that loveliest and noblest countryside in all Germany, the Franconian provinces of Bavaria. Here one fine town neighbours another. Rothenburg, the finest surviving example of a medieval town, with its walls and towers, lay a few miles away; his mother came from Dinkelsbühl, which in beauty vies with Rothenburg, and grew up there in the famous wooden Deutsches Haus, which tourists from all the world come to see, for her father had an inn in that ancestral home of a Bavarian noble family. Otto Strasser's grandfather was another great link with the life of Bavaria, where beer is a second religion, and marvellous beer it is too, for he was a well-to-do peasant and owned a brewery. A fine countryside, this, where Otto Strasser grew up; the foreigner may seek his life long, and fail to account for the contrast between these noble cities, this thriving and well-farmed land, and the things that the State, Germany, does.

The people of these parts are devout Catholics, and the Strassers belonged to them in this as in all else. Here grew the root of his religious feeling.

The third of Otto Strasser's roots, the political root, came in a curious way.

Political thought, like the fruits of nature, flourishes in Franconia, which has supplied more famous German politicians than any other German land, among them Stein, Metternich, Baron von Dahlberg, Franz von Sickingen, Ulrich von Hutten and Florian Geyer. Otto Strasser's father was, outwardly, the model of a quiet, diligent, middle-rank civil servant in the judicial service. But in his heart he was a revolutionary Socialist — on a Christian, not a Marxist basis.

His mind, behind his sober, workaday outer man, was discontented with the things his eye saw, in a world of courts and pomp, and he wrote, and published anonymously, as a civil servant must if he wishes to print his thoughts, a book called *Der Neue Weg* (The New Way) which set forth his political ideas for A New Germany. Nearly all Germans, at that time and for long after, were thinking about that New Germany; not much later, young Adolf Hitler was to start thinking about it, too. The book was published under the pseudonym of Paul Weger — a half-pun on its author's name, Peter Strasser.

The political itch left him no rest, and he afterwards wrote a second book, but his wife caught him at it. She was a typical official's wife, with the passion of the female defending her young for the safe, prosaic existence, with a pension at the end of it, which her husband could look forward to, as a government servant, if he kept his mouth shut and his views to himself. The sounds of loud scolding might have been heard in the home of the

Strassers at this time, and the end was that Peter Strasser, a man of peace, gave up his project and locked his manuscript away.

But here was the political germ, which, for all the good *Hausfrau's* antagonism, presently reappeared in the blood of his sons. Exactly the same dispute repeated itself in the life of Otto Strasser at a later date and led to his divorce from his first wife (his present marriage is his third.) Otto Strasser, unlike his father, emerged victor in this household strife, and parted company from his wife rather than abandon his political convictions. He was the revolutionary Socialist resolute; his father, the revolutionary Socialist frustrated. For these reasons Peter Strasser always took Otto Strasser's part in his later disputes.

I have recorded these things because they explain the man, Otto Strasser, of to-day: a South German homeland, a religious upbringing, an inherited political interest.

The rest, until the starting gun sounded, is almost irrelevant, but not quite. He left school in 1913 and, because his father could not afford to pay more fees than those he was already paying for Gregor at the university and Paul at a grammar school, Otto became an apprentice in a textile factory.

'A terrible year', he says, 'six months in the counting house, six months in the workshops.' In the first he learned only to fill the inkpots (typewriters had not then reached the factory), copy the letters, fetch their food for the clerks and workmen at 10 o'clock, and stick on stamps. And in the second six months, in the factory itself, he learned to pack things up. 'I can make a wonderful parcel to-day and have never forgotten this.' In September 1914 he was to have resumed his studies, for which the fees were now available — but the starting-gun sounded.

Otto Strasser was 16 years and 10 months old. On August 2nd, 1914, he reported himself as a volunteer in Augsburg; Hitler reported on the same day, in Munich. Strasser wanted to be a light cavalryman — those long overcoats, those heavy sabres, those clanking spurs! — but after being locked in a riding school with 300 other volunteers for three days, and forgotten, he broke out and was accepted by the Fourth Artillery Regiment, on six weeks probation, because he was weakly! The six weeks lengthened into five years.

He was a boy of sixteen. This was the most formative period of his life. Though the war only steeled his love of Germany, and his feeling for the German army, he thinks to-day with horror of his experiences as a recruit and young soldier in Imperial Germany. His description of them deepens the eternal perplexity of the foreigner at the duality of the German character, at the Jekyll-and-Hyde nature of a people in which the highest military and civic qualities are seen side by side with a bestial brutality.

Strasser was passionately a soldier at heart, but regards the non-commissioned-officers of that day as the most repulsive beings he has known. Among the 300 men in his unit were some 180 students, and the non-commissioned-officers vented their especial spleen on these in ways which left him with an ineradicable loathing of a

OTTO STRASSER AS A VOLUNTEER IN A LIGHT CAVALRY REGIMENT, 1914

class of man now best represented among the senior Brown Army commanders.

Let Strasser describe some of these scenes for himself. 'One Saturday afternoon in October 1914, when we were all due for leave in the town, had our best uniforms on and the girls waiting outside, an enormously corpulent sergeant-major had us all on parade and shouted, "Those who speak English or French, parade on the right; those who play the piano, on the left". At that time Turkey had just entered the war and in our innocence we thought that men who could understand the orders, given in French or English, of Turkish officers might be wanted for service with the Orient Army, so most of us rushed to volunteer. Then the sergeant-major, inflating his paunch and regarding us malevolently, said, "*So*, and now the piano-players can get to work scrubbing the floors, and the conceited intellectuals on the right may spend the afternoon cleaning the closets. The others can go out. Dismiss!" From that day, I never again paraded my intellectual attainments in the army. I went off to the closets, found them stopped-up and in a disgusting condition, and asked the shoemaker-corporal to give me a long piece of strong wire with a hook at the end to help me in cleaning them. While I was doing this, a corporal came up behind me, and said: "What are you doing?" I reported most obediently, "I am cleaning the closets, according to orders". "You conceited intellectual swine, get down on your knees and do it with your hands, like a soldier." I was compelled to lie down full length in this filth and clean it with my bare hands. Since that day I have a hatred of these people which nothing can kill.

They are the SS men of to-day. The SS spirit was born there.'

(The 'SS man' of whom Strasser speaks is the black-uniformed member of the *Schutzstaffel*, formerly the *élite* corps of the Brown Army, later used for concentration camp duty, beatings-up, killings, and espionage on the home-front in general.)

'Stables' was sounded at four o'clock in the morning, and the straw had then to be cleaned. Strasser hit on the idea of taking a pitchfork and lifting the straw with it, so that the droppings fell through and the clean straw remained. Again came the corporal, with his abuse of the 'damned intellectuals', and ordered this work, too, to be done with the hands. One such man compelled a young recruit to drink from a spittoon; the lad never got over this, and shot himself.

These things are almost beyond belief, but they happened in Germany, and here you have them from the lips of a German patriot. I knew of them, and many other foreigners knew of them, and saw that this spirit, this scum, would come to the top if Hitler's National Socialism prevailed. It did; and although I do not believe that such things occur in the German Army to-day, they have reappeared, as Otto Strasser says with perfect truth, in another form — the bestialities of the SS and their concentration camps. (I wrote almost exactly the same thing in *Insanity Fair*.)

Strasser's worst experience was at the hands of a sergeant who particularly hated him, apparently on the same ground, that he was an 'intellectual'.

At the front, in a battery position, in April 1915, this man compelled Strasser to clean his top-boots at four o'clock every morning, first excreting in them so that he should not himself have to go out in the cold. Later, in a reserve position, he put Strasser, though he was a bombardier and had nothing to do with the horses, to cleaning horses so lice-ridden that some of them had to be destroyed. The man on this duty became covered with lice at the first stroke of the brush, with the result that his comrades would not allow him in the dugout and he had to sleep in the open. An officer found Strasser thus, trying to sleep, heard the story, gave orders that he should never be put to this duty again, and gave the sergeant fourteen days field punishment. When he came out, he encountered Strasser and advanced on him, roaring, in the untranslatable and unprintable jargon of the parade-ground terror of those days, 'I'll smear your brains on the wall for this'.

Strasser drew his revolver and was prepared to shoot, whereon the sergeant shouted, 'Now I've got you, you ——', and had him court martialled. But Strasser was acquitted and the sergeant again punished.

This story had a sequel. In January 1918 Strasser was a battery-commander at the front and received a draft, including this man. He told him, quietly, that the old incident was forgotten, but that if he ever caught him mishandling a bombardier he would have him degraded. The battery sergeant-major was given instructions particularly to watch this man, who later was caught at the same trick. He came before a court martial, was degraded, and received five years penal servitude.

Otto Strasser was seventeen years old when these things happened. They are important, in a man who may come to the forefront of affairs — because they explain and give truth to the words he utters to-day: 'Since that time I have an undying hatred of militarism, as opposed to the calling of a soldier, which is something quite different.' They also explain his hatred of Hitlerism, which for him means Germany in the grip of the men who treated him thus in 1914.

In October 1914, fearing that he would not reach the front before the war ended, he volunteered, though a trained artilleryman by now, for transfer to the infantry. At that time the Sixth Bavarian Reserve Infantry Division consisted of four regiments, the 16th, 17th, 20th and 21st. Adolf Hitler was serving in the 16th, as a headquarters orderly, behind the front. Strasser was posted to the 20th, and, just seventeen years old, went into the trenches in Flanders, with British troops, at first the Sikhs, against him, at Wytschaete and Warneton.

More than half the volunteers were students, of Strasser's age or thereabouts. They went into battle like the picture-book heroes, singing *Deutschland über Alles*, and at Warneton Strasser's company lost seven-tenths of its men. 'The English fire,' he says, 'was deadly.'

There he lay until March 1915. Then his battalion was rushed off towards the Russian front, in night marches so cold and exhausting that the coffee in the water-bottles froze and the men collapsed by the roadside, and the threats of officers, with brandished swords and revolvers, could not move them. They slept like the dead for twenty-four hours in a disused factory —

and were rushed back to hold the great British attack at Neuve Chapelle.

In March 1915 Strasser was re-transferred to the artillery, and, after the court martial, sent up to Armentières, where he won the Iron Cross, Second Class, during a British attack in the late summer. By September 1915 he was sergeant; then in May 1916 he was seriously wounded by a shell splinter; on Christmas Eve 1916, as he was preparing to celebrate the festival, he was ordered by telegram to join a newly-formed section, the Third, of the First Bavarian Reserve Artillery Regiment. At Verdun, he was in charge of his battery's telephones; by May 1917 he was a warrant officer; and in October 1917, artillery lieutenant.

Hard fighting, on that muddy Western Front, where the great armies lay locked in each other's grip. Now began his service as a German officer, and to-day his hatred for the non-commissioned-officers of that time is equalled by his admiration for the German Officers' Corps. Here, he found in many things a truer democracy and a finer spirit. Here, he found the calling of a soldier.

His battery commander was Count von Hertling, a nephew of the German Chancellor of the same name about that time. Otto Strasser gives the following example of the spirit he admires:

'No candidate was admitted to the Officers' Corps, that is, to the rank of lieutenant, without the *unanimous* agreement of all officers in the unit. It was thus like a club, and the rule was most jealously held. Without such a unanimous proposal from the Officers' Corps, the King of Bavaria himself' (Strasser served throughout in the

Bavarian Army) 'could not appoint an officer. The then Bavarian War Minister was much annoyed that his son, the ensign Count X, was not made an officer. The colonel of the regiment asked Count von Hertling, the battery commander, why he would not propose him, and Hertling answered "He is incapable, cowardly, of no use to us". A few weeks later came an urgent telegram from the Bavarian War Minister asking why Count X had not been nominated, as His Majesty wished to make him an officer at Christmas. Count von Hertling once more declined to nominate him. Thereupon the colonel called a meeting of all officers in the regiment; he wished to have Count Hertling voted down. The colonel addressed his officers and put his case before them, saying, "After all, gentlemen, this is the son of the War Minister, and after all, again, we have enough stupid officers in the army, one more won't make much difference, and in addition it is the express wish of His Majesty, or at any rate papa says so; it is a great scandal in the court circle at Munich". Answered Count Hertling: "I can certainly understand that Herr Papa is troubled about this, but the lives of the soldiers whom Count X would have under him as an officer are more important than the dissatisfaction in court circles in Munich." A vote was then taken of all the officers present, and with a large majority Count Hertling's attitude was endorsed and that of the colonel rejected. His Majesty the King of Bavaria and his War Minister had no choice but to take the young Count X away and transfer him to a more docile regiment — but the First Bavarian Artillery Regiment was the best in the State, and ranked with the

Guards. Count X eventually obtained his lieutenancy in some remote and unsought-after regiment with a very low number — the 46th, or something of that sort.'

That is another illuminating glimpse of a country, Germany, and of a German, Otto Strasser. In the political events that followed the war, the Strassers always stood well with the army, and had friends in its highest ranks. Indeed, after Hitler came to power the Army would have liked to unseat Hitler and put Gregor Strasser in his place; that was one reason for the great clean-up of June 30th, 1934, and for the killing of Gregor Strasser. These threads have never been entirely cut, and may prove important yet.

Now came the last great convulsion of the 1914-18 war, the last great German victory in that war of great German victories but not of victory. Tsarist Russia had collapsed, and Russia was in the throes of the Bolshevist Revolution, the plague-germs of which had been sent there, in the persons of Lenin and his alien throng, by Germany. The German rear was free; all the German weight could be thrown against the West, before the mass of American troops arrived. Ludendorff made his last great throw for victory. The British Fifth Army took the full shock of the German onslaught. Once more, the German tide set in strongly, flowing towards Paris, that strand so often lapped but never quite reached.

On that famous day, March 21st, 1918, Otto Strasser was in the front line of the attack, south of Saint Quentin. He was artillery liaison officer, with the duty of maintaining communication between the advancing infantry and the guns behind them, and on that day there was first tried a new variation of the method of throwing the infantry forward immediately behind a progressively advancing curtain of fire.

Almost without loss, and helped by fog, the German troops in Strasser's sector, the spearhead of the attack, took the first and second British lines, and found themselves four hundred yards from a British battery. The infantry commander declined to advance farther, and Strasser called for volunteers. Seventeen men responded, and with them he took the battery, shooting the British battery commander in the hip with his revolver and demanding to know from him, as he lay, the position of the next battery. 'I won't tell you,' said this officer. 'So I had him bandaged,' says Strasser, 'but I made his own men carry him off. And then I turned one of the British guns round and silenced a machine-gun nest with it.'

For this and other exploits in those fateful days, including the capture of a British brigade staff, Strasser, who in the meantime had received the Iron Cross, First Class, and the Bavarian Distinguished Service Order, was recommended twice for the Bavarian Max Josef Order. This was the rarest German decoration for valour, more highly coveted even than the Prussian Pour le Mérite which Göring wears, and carried the predicate of nobility with it. Otto Strasser would have been able to call himself Ritter Otto von Strasser, as John Brown may become Sir John Brown, K.C.B. But the German collapse and the disappearance of the Bavarian monarchy ended his hopes of receiving the award.

Those were great days for Otto Strasser. He knew the exhilaration of a big advance, victory seemed to lie behind each new objective, hope was high in him and his men. He has the greatest respect for the British Army, against which he did most of his fighting, and for Britain as a foe; 'When the British once start,' he then wrote, 'they don't let go,' and I think he is right in this: the bulldog simile has actually some truth. The commander of the *Graf Spee* said the same thing twenty-one years later.

But in that spring, as he pushed forward with his men, the war really seemed to be going well for Germany. Her armies held nearly all Europe; they had crushed Russia; now they were storming Paris-ward again.

That was a spring to inspire a young officer. Ludendorff would win the game yet! What a general, thought Strasser and his comrades. (To-day, Strasser says he is almost horrified to see how Hitler is repeating all Ludendorff's mistakes. Ludendorff conquered one country, vanquished one foe, won one victory after another — so many victories, but not victory. Hitler is doing the same, says Strasser. He has swallowed two countries; he may yet swallow half a dozen more; he may go from victory to victory; but never to Victory.) Looking back on those days, Otto Strasser inclines to think that Ludendorff made a mistake, after the collapse of Russia, in launching the entire remaining strength of Germany against the French and British on the Western Front. Better, he thinks, if Ludendorff had used a part of it to overrun Italy; that victory could have been had fairly cheaply and the impression it would have made would have put Germany in a better position to bargain for a favourable peace.

As to that, none can say, now. But as the summer came, the German advance slowed down, the Americans poured into France in ever greater numbers, and Otto Strasser's heart began to sink. By June 1918 the promises of the German Admiralty to prevent the transport of American troops to France through the use of the submarine, had been proved vain. Half a million Americans were already there, and each month that succeeded would bring a quarter of a million more.

'And what soldiers!' says Otto Strasser. 'I shall never forget the impression that my first encounter with the Americans made on me, on August 25th, 1918. I was defending with my battery and a few infantrymen and machine-gunners a canal-crossing near Soissons. We had been falling back for days before an urgent and superior enemy. We were without proper supplies of munitions or food, we could not get our wounded and sick away. We had no mail, no trustworthy communication with headquarters, or with our flanks. We dug ourselves in at this important bridge to hold up the advancing enemy — black French Colonial troops — as long as we could and cover the retreat of the main body. Some hours passed and, to our surprise, we saw no sign of the enemy. With an orderly, I rode carefully across the bridge and into no-man's land, which was a mile broad at that point.

'Suddenly I saw in front of me, about half a mile away, turning a tree-hidden corner in the road, endless marching columns of cheerful, singing troops in fours, brand-new equipment from their boots to their steel helmets. They marched and sang as if in the midst of peace, splendid young fellows. Four years earlier, in the summer of 1914, we had marched off to war looking like that!

'For the first time, as I watched them, fear rose in me — fear that we should lose the war. What did it avail us that our shells and machine-gun fire mowed down these incautious lads in swathes, just as we were mown down by the British in Flanders in 1914? This human torrent was so mighty, so relentless, that we were bound to drown in it.

'And' — adds Otto Strasser, and this is important — 'no German soldier who had that experience, who with his own eyes saw the contrast between the starved, ragged and exhausted figures of our diminishing army, and the well-nourished, splendidly-equipped, well-trained and well-rested lads of the innumerable American armies, can ever believe in the stupid and venomous fairytale of the "Stab-in-the-back".'

(I say this is important, because Hitler succeeded, through the irresolution and passivity with which the outer world accepted his successive armed coups, in making the Germans ultimately believe that they had never been beaten in the field, but had only lost the war through the 'Stab-in-the-back' of strikers and mutineers at home.)

Thus, hard on the heels of the triumphant spring and the summer of doubt, came the autumn of disillusionment and despair. This was the first of the really bitter periods in Otto Strasser's life.

Here you have the picture, in the words of a man who, unlike Hitler, was in the forefront of the fighting, advance or retreat:

'Wherever the Allies attacked, our High Command defended every scrap of trench at enormous cost in life, then withdrew a mile or two to ease the pressure, and made a new stand. The German guns were worn out, and the supply of new ones could not keep pace with the need. The German artillery lost irreplaceable material. The German battalions mustered less than 500 men, after two or three days fighting they were down to 300 and 200, to the strength of companies. But these men were burnt-out slack. Whole divisions were no stronger than, in 1914, had been a single regiment, sometimes even weaker than that. Reinforcements were made up of half-grown lads and fifty-year-olds, fathers, grandfathers, sick, half-invalided men. The uniforms were made of substitute materials, the boots were of odd pieces of leather held together by cobbler's thread, leather equipment gave way to hempen makeshifts. The food, already bad, diminished even in quantity.'

Germany was beaten. 'I realized by then that there was no hope left,' says Otto Strasser. 'The spirit was one of desperation. Murmurs of mutiny were in the air. The troops were inferior. The game was up.'

Retreat from glory! Strasser fought rearguard actions. His battery was the only one of the division which was not captured; he saved his own guns and three Prussian guns as well. In September he was so ill with sciatica that he could neither walk nor ride, and had to be carried. An inglorious end to that jubilantly undertaken adventure. A sick man on a stretcher returned to a chaotic Germany where a youngster burning with patriotism had left a prosperous and well-found land.

As the German revolution approached, Otto Strasser lay in hospital in Munich; in another hospital, at the opposite end of Germany, in Pasewalk, was Adolf Hitler.

On November 6th, 1918, Strasser, a veteran of twenty-one, was allowed out of hospital, on crutches, for the first time. He used this opportunity to pay a quick visit to his parents, now at Deggerndorf. On November 7th he had to return. As he arrived in Munich he heard the roar of a mob. Hundreds of rioters thronged the station and stormed the train, arresting all officers save Strasser, because he was crippled. But they made to tear off the cockade from his cap and his officer's shoulder-straps.

He drew his revolver — this man has been drawing his revolver now for twenty years or more. A soldier came towards him, told him good-humouredly not to be silly, took the revolver away, and told the crowd, 'I know him, he was my officer in the war. He's all right, he's one of the best. Leave him alone'.

Strasser had never seen him before. He was a *Soldatenrat*, a member of the revolutionary Soldiers', Sailors' and Workmen's Councils, and wore the red armband. He accompanied Strasser to his hotel, and brought him civilian clothes there. Strasser decided to stay in Munich.

This was a very different homecoming from the one the German soldiers had pictured to themselves — the traditional, triumphal homecoming of flower-tossing maidens, cheering crowds, bands, bugles and beer. The race that began with the starting-gun seemed to have finished, but actually it was just getting under way.

CHAPTER 4

BELATED HOMECOMING

Otto Strasser, on two crutches, with chaos around him, took stock of his life and surveyed the future. First, he decided to resume those studies interrupted, in 1913, by lack of funds, and, in 1914, by the starting-gun. Now, he was equally short of time and of money. Curtailed courses, three-years-in-one, were available for the men whose education had been stopped by the war, but even this was too long for him. He could only count on his officer's pay as long as he was sick, and resolved to complete that one-year course, somehow, by hook or by crook, in six months.

But first, he had to nurse his health, and to that end he went to a modest Bavarian spa, Bad Eibling, and found there, as well as health, politics. Here came about, in a strange way, his first small appearance on a political stage.

Before I describe it, I want again to trace the growth of political thought in this man. In the beginning, it was inherited, this longing for a just social order that burns in so many Germans, from his father, that outwardly calm, inwardly fiery Bavarian state official.

Then, in the war, as an officer, he had to give 'patriotic instruction' to his men. This was ordered by General Ludendorff, who already scented disaster, at the end of 1917 and was intended to 'improve the spirit of the troops'. In dugouts and billets, the men gathered round their officers, who were supposed to dispel their doubts about the war and its results and the things that Germany ostensibly was fighting for, and to convince them that all questions, all doubts, all scruples, found their ultimate answer in the words 'Kaiser', 'Fatherland', 'Patriotism', and the like.

Otto Strasser was himself, in his heart, a Socialist — a Socialist of a special kind, as I shall presently explain — and the questions that some of his men put to him, though he turned them aside or stalled them off with patriotic eyewash, rankled and festered in his mind. Some of them, indeed, would put all the professors in the world to rout in their succinctness, in their simple expression of an unanswerable thought, and even in their language. For instance, this retort, when Otto Strasser spoke of The Fatherland:

'Sehen S', Herr Leutnant, i' bin a Taglöhner; i' hab ka' Land; mei' Vater hat ka' Land; also, was haast für mich Vaterland?'

The beauty of this unfortunately is a little lost in translation, but it means: 'Look, Herr Leutnant, I am a day-labourer; I own no land; my father owns no land; so what, for me, is Fatherland?'

And this question, put by a Bavarian private who in civilian life was a textile worker in Augsburg: 'Herr Leutnant, what is Germany to me? I earn my wage, and it is never more, though it can be less. I can earn it anywhere I go in the world. What difference does it make to me if the English capitalist, or the Italian capitalist, or the French capitalist, or the German capitalist pays me my wages. When I am old and used-up they will chuck me out anyway. So what is Germany to me?'

Picture Otto Strasser, in some candle-lit barn, or dugout parrying these questions. This life, these experiences, added to his inheritance, were forming the man who was developing into an anti-international Socialist, or, to use the term which Hitler afterwards misused, a National *Socialist.*

This, in the simplest possible analysis, is the deep-lying difference in thought which for years prevented Otto Strasser from joining Hitler, which later led him to break away from Hitler, and is responsible for his subsequent long and undaunted struggle against Hitler — the difference between National *Socialism* and *National* Socialism.

For Otto Strasser, Socialism was always the noun, National merely the adjective, and he rightly foresaw disaster in the blurring of that fact. In a long altercation between him and Hitler, once, the issue was joined on this point, and Hitler, the wordy, accused Strasser of humbugging with words. But Strasser answered, again rightly, that this was no question of juggling with words, but of a fact and a truth, and of the things they were or were not working for. As stupid, he argued, to deny that a bath-chair was in fact a chair, or a lieutenant-colonel a colonel; by Hitler's argument, a field-marshal would have been a field. Socialism on a patriotic basis, Strasser wanted; not militarism with the word Socialist tacked on to it to dupe the masses. And that is exactly the issue, to-day as then.

In the officers' mess, Strasser was wont to discuss these encounters with his men, and to argue that the governing classes in Germany were wrong not to put themselves at the head of the Socialist masses, not to guide, instead of trying to repress, the longing for a just social order which was fermenting in the German soul. 'We officers, and not the Jews, should lead the workers,' he argued. This made him politically a little suspect in the Officers' Corps, and he was known as The Red Lieutenant.

But back to Bad Eibling, and Otto Strasser's first appearance in politics. The Republic had been proclaimed in Bavaria. Strasser, at his spa, had to conceal the fact that he was an officer, for the peat-workers from the neighbouring Kolbermoor were violent revolutionaries. The Jewish Communist leader from Munich, Kurt Eisner, came to Bad Eibling for this very reason.

Otto Strasser, now on two sticks, attended the meeting, a large one, held in December 1918. He looked down from the gallery, where he was accompanied by half a dozen men of his own mind, upon the crowded hall, and listened to things which 'made me almost mad with rage'.

Kurt Eisner, with long hair and beard, looked like the caricatures of a Ghetto Jew. He was, in fact, by origins a Polish Jew and spoke defective German; he had not been in the war, but had written for the Socialist *Vorwärts*. He was, therefore, 'a Socialist'. So was the angry man listening from the gallery. This picture will perhaps show the difference between one Socialist and another Socialist.

'Kurt Eisner spoke with a fearful Galician accent and with typically Jewish gestures. He was as clever in the methods he used with this yokel audience as any trickster at a fair. "They reproach me with being a Prussian", he said, to odd cries of *Jawohl, du Saupreusse*; "If my mother in her ninth month had come to Munich and I had been born here I should have been a Bavarian. But — with spreading arms — *wäre ich ein anderer gewesen?* Should I have been a different man?" One or two peasants scratched their heads at this and nodded at each other, "Yes, that's right, he's right there". Then he continued: "Secondly, they reproach me with being a Jew." (Odd cries of, *Jawohl, du Saujude!*) "But was not Christ a Jew? The man who vilifies us Jews, vilifies Christ." This completely flummoxed the peasants, who were devout Catholics, and they shuffled uncomfortably and looked uncertainly at each other and nodded, as if they felt there was a catch in this somewhere, couldn't for the life of them see where, but had better keep on the right side of the Church anyway.

'Then he started. He shouted that Germany was guilty of the war, that the officers had swilled and guzzled while the troops were driven into the enemy's fire. Both his speech and that of a fat cattle-dealer, Gandorfer, who followed him were directed mainly against the officers. "These officers, these *Schweinehunde*, went whoring and boozing, and you had to die for them." '

This was too much for the red-faced man in the gallery, who shouted repeatedly 'You liar, you liar', so that the chairman of the meeting called up, 'If you want to speak, come down and speak afterwards in the debate'.

'I will', said Strasser, and this was his first public appearance.

He had never spoken before, he was almost incoherent with indignation, he was twenty-one years old, he was sick, and he had a hostile audience. 'I spoke badly, but it took effect,' says Strasser. 'I told them that proportionately the casualties among officers had been three times as high as those among the men. Not the officers enriched themselves,' I said, 'but the war profiteers, like this fat Gandorfer here. Where were you in the war, Herr Eisner? Where were you in the war, Herr Gandorfer? I was at the front; so were you who sit down there. Ask these loudmouthed gentlemen here where they were, and if they only had sixpence a day pay, like us.'

While he was speaking, his hosts inquired who he was, and suddenly Gandorfer sprang up, pushed him aside, and shouted, 'Comrades, now we have unveiled this fellow — he's an officer!' There was tumult in the hall, the peat-workers, who carry knives in their right boots, surged angrily towards the platform. The men on the platform seized Strasser, pushed him to the back door, threw him out and locked it.

These two men, Otto Strasser and Kurt Eisner, both called themselves 'Socialists'. I stress this point, in order to show what very different types of men may be covered by this name.

Soon after, Kurt Eisner was shot in Munich by Count Arco. Thereupon the Red Republic was proclaimed; until then, there had been a Left Coalition Government of Socialists, Independent Socialists, and Communists.

Levine, a Russian Jew and emissary from Moscow, was the moving spirit in the Munich Soviet; other Jews in it were Ernst Toller and Erich Mühsam.

The most famous Bavarian soldier, General von Epp, began to recruit men to oust the Red Government in Munich. He had seen colonial service, and in the war was, first, Colonel of the Bavarian Guard and later general officer commanding the Bavarian Alpine Corps, *élite* troops. He had fled to Ohrdruf in Thuringia and, with one Captain Ernst Röhm as his chief-of-staff, formed the Epp Free Corps, which all patriotic Bavarians tried to join.

In Munich, the Red Government, fearing the attack, arrested hundreds of hostages, chiefly officers, and now a very sinister thing happened, which deserves a much greater place in the history of the Jews in politics than it has received. Among the hostages were twenty-two members of the 'Tulle Society', a small and unimportant body which fostered the cult of old German literature, traditions, folklore, legends, and the like. Anti-Semitism was an integral part of its teaching; so was anti-Christianity. It was an insignificant group without any power or possibility of putting its theories into practice. It had no single politician among its members, only a few old professors and noblemen.

Of all the hundreds of hostages precisely these twenty-two people, including several women, among them Countess Westarp, were taken out and shot by the alien Jewish Government of Munich!

The Epp Free Corps took shape for the expedition against Red Munich. All the figures who later played a big part in the European drama gathered for this smaller one — save Hitler!

Hitler was in Munich. He was still a soldier. He had, as he tells in *Mein Kampf*, taken that fearsome anti-Bolshevist oath in hospital at Pasewalk. He was already resolved to save the world from Bolshevism. Yet he did not spring to save Munich from Bolshevism. He did not make his way out and join the Epp Free Corps, although he avowedly burned to fight. He was in Munich, and he was a soldier. But the soldiers in Munich were under the orders of the Red Government, the Jewish Government ruled from Moscow. If he was in barracks, he must have been — a Red!

There was much muttering and murmuring among the National Socialist leaders, much shaking of puzzled heads, in later years, about this, but not the hint of an explanation of his doings in Munich at that time ever came from Hitler. This is a complete gap in *Mein Kampf*. It is one of the darkest things in all his dark history. I would give almost anything I have to know for whom that man really worked, not only then, but at all times later.

Otto Strasser first drew my particular attention to this remarkable episode in Hitler's life. Although I had closely studied these things, I had overlooked it, and I do not think any other writer has noticed its significance or discussed it. Indeed, a man who was up to the neck in the political turmoil of those days, as was Otto Strasser, is needed to put it in its true proportion, and future historians will be indebted to him for this, because it is one of the most important of the things we know, and they are too few, about the man Hitler. Later, when we know more of him, and the double or triple game he always played is clearer to see, it may prove to be the missing piece in the jigsaw puzzle.

It is worth explaining more fully, for this reason. The Red regime in Munich lasted from November 1918 until May 1st, 1919. Hitler, according to his own account in *Mein Kampf*, was filled with the most violent hatred of the Jewish-Communist revolution in Germany from the moment it broke out, in the first days of November. In the last days of November, cured and discharged from hospital, he reported to his regimental depot — in that very Munich where the Reds were most powerful.

His own battalion was under the orders of the revolutionary 'Soldiers' Council'. This so disgusted him, he says, that by some means he contrived to be sent to a camp at Traunstein, a few miles away. He says that he returned to Munich 'in March'. The Reds were driven out by von Epp and the Prussian troops at the end of April. For about two months, therefore, Hitler, a serving soldier, was in Munich when the Red regime was at its height, under the rule of a Russian Jew sent from Moscow, when the hostages were being shot.

Good Bavarians who were there at the same time contrived, by hook or by crook, to get out of Munich and make their way to von Epp, returning with him to drive the Reds out. Otto Strasser did this, at the risk of his life and after surmounting many difficulties.

Hitler, who devotes so many pages in his book to windy abuse of the Reds in Moscow and of International Bolshevism in general, stayed quietly in Munich. He says no word of his life in Munich during those two months. He gives no description of the horrors he saw — he, who later rails for pages at a time about the wholesale massacres in Moscow — or of conditions in Munich at all.

But, and this is the vital point, he was a soldier, and soldiers who stayed in Munich were under the orders of that Red Government; if they didn't like it, they deserted by night to von Epp, in Thuringia, and Hitler did not do that. He was then — a Red! He probably wore the red arm-band. Presumably, with the rest of the Munich garrison, he took part in the fighting against von Epp's troops.

What other leader of such a party as the National Socialist Party would in a book pass over in silence such a period as this? All Hitler has to say about it is the vague and unintelligible remark that he was 'nearly arrested' three days before the Reds were driven out. From that he calmly passes on to a sentence beginning: 'A few days after the liberation of Munich I was . . .' Nothing about his reasons for staying in Munich, nothing about the horrors of a Red regime which he actually knew, nothing about the severe fighting that preceded the liberation of Munich, nothing about the triumphal entry of von Epp's troops.

Every other notable National Socialist leader or Storm Troop commander, in those days, fought with one or other of the Free Corps somewhere in Germany; this was the very thing that gave them a claim to subsequent advancement in the Party. But the Führer himself, the arch anti-Red — was in Munich. He, who was always filled with a religious horror and hatred of the Bolshevists, retained from these months spent under their rule in a city that he regarded as his adopted birthplace no single memory worth putting on paper.

I believe that future historians will need to start their researches into his life in Munich, in the period between March and May 1919, and unless all the tracks have faded they will discover some strange things. Otto Strasser says that for many years afterwards — until the advent to power placed Hitler on a pedestal elevated above all such doubts, which would have cost the audible doubter his life — the National Socialist leaders, when they were talking together of this and that, always returned to the question 'What was Adolf doing in Munich in March and April 1919?' and the answer was always a perplexed shrug of the shoulders or shake of the head.

But all the other men concerned in these events acted as they preached. Von Epp and Röhm formed their Free Corps. Gregor Strasser, back from the war, after serious wounds, had already formed a patriotic Free Corps (the *Verband Nationalgesinnter Soldaten Niederbayerns*) at Landshut.

This immensely popular man, the living embodiment of the German tragedy, who had a rare gift for talking to his men on equal terms, soon had together a troop of 2000 infantrymen, three field batteries, and a 15cm. howitzer battery, with full war equipment and munitions! Such things were possible in that chaotic Germany.

Gregor Strasser was for a time lord of Lower Bavaria, but as he was an apothecary by day, and could only become a Free Corps leader by night, he took a helper, a young man called Heinrich Himmler. Himmler had not been in the war; he was too young. He reached the rank of ensign at home, but never became an officer, and suffered ever afterwards from a sense of military inferiority for this reason, which he strove to compensate through exaggeratedly coarse and loud militarist behaviour. He had vaguely studied agriculture; but his first profession was that of being adjutant to Gregor Strasser. By day, when Gregor Strasser was busy in his chemist's shop, Himmler was a great man.

Gregor Strasser and his miniature army immediately joined von Epp. (Himmler, for some reason, did not.) Otto Strasser abandoned the studies he had just taken up in Munich and with great difficulty contrived to smuggle himself out of Red Munich and join von Epp at Ohrdruf. As von Epp had too many officers, Otto Strasser served as bombardier with a mechanized battery.

The march on Munich began — the Epp Free Corps and a regular Prussian division. In Munich, the Russian Jew Levine ruled. In two days Munich was captured, after fierce fighting. Levine was court martialled and shot. Otto Strasser is entitled to wear on his left arm the golden lion of the Epp Free Corps.

This episode is also important, for students of contemporary history who seek to know what sort of a Socialist Otto Strasser is. Hitler, the anti-internationalist, the anti-Marxist, the anti-Bolshevist, the anti-Jew, the anti-Socialist, was nowhere to be found in those days. Otto Strasser, who is not only a Socialist but an anti-militarist, was *dabei*, he was there, he fought to turn the

Reds out. If you think about these things long enough, and put them in their proper places, and study many other things that Hitler has done, many of your ideas will change.

On May Day 1919 came the triumphal entry into Munich. The Bavarian soldiers had dreamed for four years of such a triumphal homecoming after the war, but instead of that they saw a revolutionary, alien-led mob which spat at every soldier who did not wear a red armband and tore off the officers' shoulder-straps.

But on this day, with summer in the air, Munich was a mass of flowers and cheering people. The incoming troops did, after all, get posies for the muzzles of their rifles and for their helmets. Otto Strasser and his comrades recaptured a broken dream; a little late, the dream came true.

CHAPTER 5

WAY OF A SOCIALIST

Now came that frenzied, tempestuous, post-war period in Germany, when middle-aged men found their lives in ruins about them, when young men back from the army sought to find a way through chaos to an ordered existence, when lads leaving school looked confusedly, like shepherdless sheep, into a scheme of things that had been shattered to bits and offered no clear way to an assured future.

All barriers had been broken down, but so had all conventions and all standards. The regimentation of the masses, which had been far too strict, gave way to a licence that was far too libertine. Youth was the prey of the free foxes in the liberated hen-roost. Chastity was the butt of a literature and a stage that, in the land of Goethe and the Meistersingers, had come predominantly under the influence of alien cheapjacks and exploiters masquerading as great writers and inspired impresarios.

'Glamour' then had its home in Berlin; its victims, girls and lads in their early teens, were openly bought and sold in the temples of sexual perversion which flourished beneath blazing electric signs in the cities. The word 'currency' became a farce, but while the savings of hard-working people vanished overnight, the manipulators, the vultures of the inflation, grew fat; the other day in London I bought for thirty shillings a collection of German banknotes issued in those days, the nominal value of which represented more billions than the vaults of the Bank of England could hold.

One great financial scandal followed another, as profiteer after profiteer and swindler after swindler decided that the time for bankruptcy was ripe. Communists revolted here; reactionaries there; and precarious coalitions of all-good-men maintained a crazy equilibrium in the land.

Amid this turmoil, Otto Strasser, a revolutionary Socialist, began to grope his way towards the future. He affirms, indeed he insists, that he is a revolutionary Socialist, but because so large a proportion of people are incapable of distinguishing between words and things, between real and imitation pearls, between the Church and Christianity, between the bawling of Rule Britannia and patriotism, I hope to explain, as this book goes on, what sort of a *man* he is.

Misleading to say that Otto Strasser is a revolutionary Socialist if the reader understands by that something different from the thing that Otto Strasser means, or something different from the truth.

For instance, if I were forcibly held down and compelled by violence to take the label of any one political party, I should have to take that of Socialist, but I should feel myself politically as outcast in the company of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Lord Snowden, and Mr. J. H. Thomas as in that of Mr. Chamberlain or Sir John Simon, as in that of any present leader of the British Socialist Party. I see no party in Britain that answers at all the longing for a better social order that fills me; they all seem to me to be groups representing special interests, without any real ideals, civic sense, or patriotism in the sense of the whole community.

Otto Strasser, as I have told, began to be a revolutionary Socialist by inheritance; he continued his revolutionary Socialism by becoming an exceptionally efficient and courageous officer in the war; he carried his revolutionary Socialism a stage further by joining in the armed liberation of his homeland from an alien regime which at first also claimed the name, Socialist; he later joined the Socialist Party; then Hitler's National Socialist Party; he is now the bitterest enemy of that party, but is also an antagonist of the Socialist Party, of Fascism, and, venomously, of Communism; because he believes that all of these have betrayed, or that none stands for, that which he wants — German Socialism.

So he is a revolutionary Socialist. The thing ought to be simple to understand, but in a world where the peoples have been brought up on catchwords and tags, it is probably difficult. Nevertheless, I hope that this book will ultimately make clear what Otto Strasser wants and what he is, for both these things are of great interest.

When Munich had been liberated, he began, once more, to strive after that coveted university degree, scrambled somehow through his exams, and in July 1919 was admitted to study at Munich University. His race was with time, and when the vacation came he rushed to Berlin to continue his studies there. He was now twenty-two.

His great problem was his daily bread. These were, as I said, the turbulent times. He had no money, and his family could give him none. The inflation was beginning.

The mark was already worth but 20 pfennigs, instead of 100. He had to earn money, somehow, to pay his fees and achieve that doctorate.

This part of his life shows the enormous energy and capacity for work of which I have already spoken. It is common among Germans, but Otto Strasser has it in an exceptional degree. He studied from eight o'clock in the morning until midday at the university, and then went to the Reichstag. This sat only in the afternoon and, to earn his fees, he found a post as stenographer in the parliamentary office of the combined Socialist provincial Press; here the reports of the debates were prepared, suitably tinted with pink, the talk-of-the-lobbies summarized, and the whole sent out to the Socialist newspapers in the country.

This work lasted until 6 or 7 o'clock in the evening, which left him an hour for a simple meal at Aschinger's, one of the cheap chain-restaurants operated by that firm in Berlin. After that, from 8 till 10 o'clock, he took unpaid evening classes for workmen, to whom he taught German history and stenography; and after that, again, he had to prepare his next morning's work for the university.

After a year, the evening classes were discontinued, and he filled in the few leisure hours which this left him by studying Japanese at the Oriental Institute in Berlin. His affections might have expected a rest, in view of all this; but even they were not spared; he found time not to neglect them. Indeed, he has driven them unremittingly, all his life, and does not regret it.

All this time Strasser was on two sticks. His hunger, or mania, for work, however, was not satisfied, and the state of affairs at the university led him to organize a League of ex-Service Students to uphold the rights of men whose studies had been interrupted by the war.

The throwing-open-of-all doors had led to the flooding of the universities, and the compressed emergency courses introduced for such men were being swamped by girls, by Jews and by others who had not served. The ex-service man, as is always the way after a war, was being elbowed aside by eager interlopers. Strasser, at the head of his League, succeeded in raising a loud voice and having this evil remedied.

Another evil, at that time, was the plight of the thousands of young men who starved themselves to finish their studies and then could obtain no employment, or who could by no means raise the fees to complete these studies. This became so grave a public scandal that the leading German industrial concerns joined to form a Students Emergency Association, charged to find employment for the masses of desperate young men who were wandering aimlessly about, and the secretary of this body was Dr. Heinrich Brüning — subsequently the Chancellor who fought so hard, but failed, to keep Hitler from power, and who is now also in exile. Strasser worked in close collaboration with him.

I have mentioned these early post-war experiences and experiments of Strasser in organizing his fellows for some cause because, though they were not specifically political, they show the mind and thought of this revolutionary Socialist. They were good undertakings, of benefit to the community.

Now, for the second time, the political impulse, that broke through for the first time in the episode at Bad Eibling, began to push him into the fray. He became a registered member of the German Socialist Party — and immediately found himself in the forefront of the dissensions which racked that party.

Otto Strasser's view then is his view to-day, the view that makes of him an exile and implacable enemy of Hitler, as it finally drove him out of the Socialist Party. He could have had popularity, position and possessions by compromise, but preferred to be adamant, and this commands respect.

He sought everywhere, but found nowhere, a German Socialism; not a State Socialism, which simply meant one big Capitalist and a horde of officials in place of many capitalists; not a thing of international roots and affiliations, alien in its origins and leadership; and certainly not National Socialism as Hitler made it, which was but capitalist-militarism masquerading as a Socialist circus. He has never faltered, that I can find, from his beginnings until his present exile, and he seems to be that rare, if not unique thing, a real National Socialist.

The Socialist Party at that time — which had committed suicide in the moment of its revolutionary triumph by calling on the regular army and the old ruling classes in general to protect it against the Communists — had formed an *Einwohnerwehr*, or Civilian Defence Corps, as an instrument for the Government to use against the Communist danger. The majority of the local branches of the Socialist Party forbade their members to join it, arguing that they wanted nothing to do with 'the officers' and with militarism, since they were internationalists and pacifists. Otto Strasser strongly advocated membership of the *Einwohnerwehr*, arguing that if the Socialists did not take it under their wing, the reactionaries would, and in his district, that populous quarter of Berlin called Steglitz, he carried the day. Steglitz joined the *Einwohnerwehr*, and Otto Strasser became the commander of Steglitz's *Hundertschaft*, the units of the *Einwohnerwehr* being called by this name of 'Hundreds'.

All this was in the spring of 1920. There followed the first attempt, called the Kapp Putsch, of the old ruling classes in Germany to dethrone the Socialist-Centrist Government, to sweep away all the newcomers who had succeeded to power in Germany, by means of armed force.

The Kapp Putsch was rather like the von Epp march on Munich, save that it had not the same justification; the Government in Berlin was predominantly Socialist, and dithering Socialist at that, but it was non-Communist and anti-Communist, and had no imported Moscovites in it. By way of contrast, the Kappists imported a man of similar type with them as Press Chief — the Hungarian Jew, Anglican Clergyman, British Member of Parliament, convicted traitor, and professional swindler, Trebitsch Lincoln! This sort of man seems to pop up in every shady affair in the history of Europe. Incidentally, Hitler's professed anti-Semitism, as I have often tried to make people understand, is another lie; witness the international string-pulling Jewess who was go-between in his negotiations with British politicians.

The Kapp soldiers ruled Berlin with their machine-guns for a day or two, until the general strike called by the fugitive Berlin Government caused the collapse of their adventure and their ignominious withdrawal, but they never attacked Steglitz, where Otto Strasser and his Socialist *Hundertschaft* were waiting, armed, to receive them. By now, the officer who had given his men 'patriotic instruction' in the war, who had challenged Kurt Eisner in the Red meeting at Bad Eibling, who had helped to drive the Communists out of Munich, was a Socialist *Hundertschaftler*, standing ready to give combat to the reactionaries. The Kappists preferred not to use force against the Steglitz Hundred; Steglitz, surrounded but not occupied, was left a peaceful Socialist island in Kappist Berlin.

When the Kappists withdrew, the convinced Socialists thought the day of real Socialism had come. The Government, too cowardly and too scared of the reactionaries to carry out its Socialist programme before, now had the power. At Bielefeld, an agreement was signed between the Government, represented by Karl Severing, and the delegates of the Socialists for the dismissal of the Police Minister, Noske, who had been too weak with the reactionaries and had allowed the Kapp Putsch to happen, for the socialization of heavy industry and for the partitioning of the big estates. On the strength of these promises, the Socialist workers laid down their arms.

The Communists and the Independent Socialists, who were near-Communists, did not, and were defeated by the same Kapp soldiers who had seized power in Berlin.

And as soon as that was accomplished, the Government disavowed the promises made by Severing.

Otto Strasser, still following without deviation his ideal of a German Socialism, now found himself with enemies on all sides. A bitter critic of the Government's betrayal of its Socialist policy and promises, he incurred the enmity of the party bosses, intent only on keeping their jobs, and at a Socialist meeting in Steglitz was denounced from the platform as 'a police spy'. (The Police Minister and the Police Chief, so illogical was this charge, were both Socialists.)

At the university, however, where he was still struggling after that degree, he was equally unpopular among the students, the majority of whom were what we should to-day call Fascists or Nazis, and was pilloried as the leader of a 'Red Hundred'. Arriving one morning at the university, he found a notice on the board announcing that he had been debarred from further study there 'pending a disciplinary investigation', and on his furious inquiry for the reason was told that his war record was suspect. By producing the official war history of his regiment, and other documents, he was able to reduce the Rector to a state of contrition and to have the insinuation withdrawn with all ceremony in the presence of the entire Students' Corps of the university, in full regalia.

But an uncompromising man was a lonely man in those days, as now. Disgusted with everything, he left the Socialist Party. The second political period in his life came to an end. For five years he stood aloof from parties, and for three years aloof, almost, from politics;

complete abstention from them would be an impossibility for this man.

In March 1921, at long last, he took his degree, at Würzburg, and is thus fated to be known to the end of his days as Doctor Otto Strasser. That opened the door to a minor appointment in the Ministry of Food, where he prosaically represented the interest of authority in artificial fertilizers and the cultivation of moors. This lasted two years. Then, one day, Count von Hertling, his commanding officer in the war, visited the Ministry. He had become head of a big industrial concern, saw Otto Strasser, and offered him an important post in it. Strasser gladly accepted. So, until 1923, as he says, 'ich sass brav in meinem Ministerium und in meiner Industriestellung, and habe eigentlich keine Politik getrieben'. 'I sat like a good boy in the Ministry and in my job, and hardly touched politics.'

November 1923 was to alter that, because it brought the Hitler Putsch in Munich and a change in Otto Strasser's views about Hitler; but a digression is necessary to keep the thread of this story unbroken.

Otto Strasser had first met Hitler in the autumn of 1920, at the time of his embitterment with all parties. He was on holiday, visiting his parents in Bavaria, when his brother Gregor invited him to Landeshut, saying that General Ludendorff, a great hero of Otto's from the war, and one Adolf Hitler, then little known, would be present. At this lunch, says Otto Strasser, 'Ludendorff made a great impression on me. Hitler did not. He was too servile to Ludendorff, and behaved himself like a battalion orderly speaking to a general. Ludendorff was like a block of granite; Hitler, like a nervous, half-hysterical spouter. He used the Jews as a common denominator for all political problems. I told Gregor that I did not want to join the party and would prefer to wait; the only thing I liked about it, I said, was the name, National Socialist, *und Du* ['and you', that is, his brother, Gregor]. Throughout 1921 and 1922, when I was out of politics, I had many disputes with Gregor about Hitler and the Party. I never felt drawn towards it and would not join. Hitler, after that lunch, always spoke of me as an *Intellektbestie*.'

Intellektbestie is difficult adequately to translate. 'One of those intellectual cranks', perhaps. It is the sort of term a man of inferior merit may use about another whose arguments have irritated and baffled him. Hitler cannot argue; the slightest hint of contradiction or challenge makes him angry and hysterical. His great good fortune, or skill, is that he never had to join in open debate with an adversary, entering Parliament and becoming dictator only when all opposition had been crushed.

But to resume the thread of the story: Gregor Strasser, several months before this lunch, had heard of Hitler, travelled to Munich, found himself in wide agreement with Hitler's views, and thereupon enlisted his little private army bodily in the National Socialist Party as its independent *Gau*, or regional organization, for Lower Bavaria. Until then, the National Socialist Party existed only in skeleton form in Munich *alone*; the recruitment of Gregor Strasser's *Verband Nationalgesinnter Soldaten Niederbayerns* marked its first extension outside Munich.

Gregor Strasser became Regional Leader, with

Heinrich Himmler, the dreaded Secret Police and SS Chief of to-day, as his secretary. Gregor Strasser had already seen that he could not indefinitely keep his private army of foot and artillery together; those days cannot be described as piping ones of peace, but the war was nevertheless receding, the times were growing quieter, the men were getting on with their jobs and forgetting to clean their rifles or turn up on parade, and Gregor Strasser thus realized that he must either disband his organization or turn it into something political. The Reds had been driven from Bavaria, anyway; indeed, in all Germany, Bavaria alone was Red-free; everywhere else the Socialists shared power.

In Bavaria, von Epp and his chief-of-staff Ernst Röhm now ruled. After the triumphal eviction of the Reds in May 1919, instead of restoring the legal, exiled Government, they had, against the wish of Berlin and of the Reichswehr regular troops who had helped them, installed a bourgeois government without any Socialists. They wished to use Bavaria as a base from which the rest of Germany could be similarly cleansed.

Röhm, an energetic soldier of revolutionary mind, was the real ruler of Bavaria; von Epp was a fine soldier, but not a brilliant thinker. Röhm had all the politics and parties of Munich at his fingertips, and employed an army of agents. Among them was the man Adolf Hitler. One day Röhm (to whom all political meetings in Munich had to be reported) said to Hitler, 'I've an announcement here of a meeting of something called the N.S.D.A.P. (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*). Go along and see what sort of a show it is'.

[*facing:* ERNST RÖHM

Here you see how, twenty years ago as I write, the plan or plot was born in an office in Munich that now has let the devil loose on us all again. Von Epp, a remarkably fine figure of a soldier, probably never had an unworthy motive in his life, and simply burned to clean up his country, as he understood cleanliness, and make it a power among nations again. Röhm was a thought too bawdy even for a hardened mind, but by the common judgment of his acquaintances was a good and loyal companion, a brave soldier, and an exceptionally good organizer.

What freakish trick of fate caused him to pick on this epileptic mongrel Hitler, whose virtues are even less than his vices, and he has no vices, this man who cannot prove what he did in Vienna before the war, or even adequately what he did in the war, or what he did in Munich after the war — until Röhm picked on him?

Röhm, sitting at his desk, chose his own executioner in the nondescript fellow standing at attention on the other side of it. More, he chose the man who was to plunge all Europe into war again. More still, he chose the man who, as I am now coming to think, is built entirely of hatreds, but among those hatreds keeps the worst for the people whose destiny he has in his hand. For the strangest passages in the conversations with Hitler which Dr. Hermann Rauschning reports are those verbal orgasms in which he frequently speaks of 'sacrificing the lives of one or two million *Germans*', of his determination, in some particular circumstances, 'to sacrifice a new *German* generation', and so on.

Hitler went to the meeting and reported to Röhm (all this information comes from Otto Strasser): 'This is a workman's party. It's something good, the sort of thing we could use, Herr Hauptmann.' Röhm was obsessed with Germany's isolation and defencelessness in the world, with the need for a new army — a secret army. He saw that the old-soldier organizations, like Strasser's *Verband* and the various Free Corps, deteriorated as the war receded, and he wanted, as did Gregor Strasser, to build a political movement which would reinvigorate them. But his real aim was to create, in the guise of Storm Troopers, a new army under the cloak of that political movement.

Hitler, with his extraordinary instinct, had recognized that the little N.S.D.A.P. was the ideal instrument for the purpose he and his masters had in mind; hence the report, 'We can use this, Herr Hauptmann'. Röhm had already remarked Hitler's talent for propaganda and political agitation, and had chosen him as one of his agents for that reason, and now said to him, in effect, 'Buy the firm out; we can make something of it'.

Röhm's sole condition was the formation of the Storm Troops, the Brown Army. Through this, he counted on remaining the master of the movement. He frequently said: 'All the rest is a matter of indifference to me; I need a well-disciplined private army'.

To this end, he gave Hitler the money to have placards printed, and to buy an obscure little local sporting-sheet, which published racing-tips and football results, called the *Völkischer Beobachter*. As the man with the money, Hitler was able to throw out the founders of the little party. He never altered its programme, which then already existed, and would never permit any discussion of it — though hardly any of its tenets have been fulfilled by him. The Brown Army was formed, by Röhm; for it Röhm borrowed the brown shirt from one of the Free Corps (Rossbach's) and the swastika from another (Ehrhardt's).

Thus did a soldier of fortune sign his own death warrant and bring disaster on Europe again, that day in Munich twenty years ago as I write. A few other details about this birth of the Hitler Party, culled from Otto Strasser's special knowledge, deserve to be recorded here:

'One of Hitler's innumerable lies, in the legend he has built up, is that he was "the seventh member" of the N.S.D.A.P. At the time when Röhm sent him to report on it, it already had several hundred members. He became the seventh member of the *executive committee*, in charge of publicity. Nor did he invent "National Socialism". The party was founded by one Harrar and Anton Drexler; they copied it from an Austrian party of the same name, the National Socialist Party, founded by the Sudeten Germans Jung and Knirsch; and they in their turn took the idea from the Czechs. A young Czech labour leader, Klovacs, in about 1892, seceded with the Czech workers from the Socialist Party in pre-war Austria-Hungary because its leadership and methods were "Jewish, international and German", and founded in Bohemia the first "National Socialist Party", whose most famous members were, later, Masaryk and Benesh. The only man in the party who has no conception of real National Socialism is Adolf Hitler.'

All this information is Otto Strasser's. The last sentence is literally his. It is, in my judgment, literally true.

Such were the beginnings of the movement which took root and grew — to the misfortune of Europe, under the leadership of a professional perjurer — while Otto Strasser was 'sitting like a good boy in his Ministry and his job and not bothering with politics'. In 1923 came its first attempt to seize power, and one effect of this was to bring Otto Strasser back into politics.

This was the story. By 1923, von Epp and Röhm no longer ruled Bavaria, but had been displaced in favour of a regime more in sympathy with Berlin. Röhm had already been elbowed aside by Hitler (who later recalled him, from Bolivia, to take over the Brown Army). Hitler, with General Ludendorff and Göring, now Storm Troop commander, attempted to displace the Bavarian Government by force, hoping, as von Epp and Röhm had previously hoped, from Bavaria to reach out and rule the Reich. Gregor Strasser was commander of the Landeshut Battalion in this exploit. Hitler, marching with his Storm Troops in the expectation that he would not be resisted, was received by the bullets of the regular troops. He fled, was arrested and imprisoned; Ludendorff was wounded; Göring was wounded but escaped abroad; Gregor Strasser was sentenced to one and a half years imprisonment. The first Hitler Putsch collapsed.

This brought a complete change in Otto Strasser's opinions about Hitler. Until then, he had not taken the National Socialist Party seriously. He had regarded it as half-reactionary, and therefore no party for a revolutionary Socialist; or, to quote his own words, as a 'cheap edition of reaction, with a red cover on it to delude the buyer'.

But in Munich, on November 9th, 1923, the bullets of a reactionary regime were fired at Hitler and his men. 'My brother was right after all,' thought Otto Strasser. 'This *is* a revolutionary movement, this *is* a Socialist movement. Hitler's flirtations with the generals and big business will have to stop now.'

This view was strengthened by Ludendorff's famous subsequent speech — the fascination of Ludendorff for many German officers must not be forgotten — in which he said, 'Now I know that the salvation and reconstruction of Germany are not possible in collaboration with the reactionaries'.

Ludendorff at that time solemnly discarded all further caste-fellowship with his kind. Otto Strasser's regiment had sent a circular letter to all its officers, including Strasser, telling them that they must choose between the Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria (the heir to the abolished crown) and General Ludendorff, and make a declaration of loyalty in this sense. Otto Strasser immediately plumped for Ludendorff, and was forthwith excluded from the Officers' Corps of his regiment.

By these means, Otto Strasser, the fervent admirer of the German Officers' Corps, the Free Corps, anti-Red soldier of Munich, the Socialist *Hundertschaftler* of Steglitz, the undaunted and undeviating seeker after 'German Socialism', was drawn again into the whirlpool of politics. He thought he had found the thing he believed in.

His brother Gregor remained in prison, with Hitler, until at the election of May 1924 he was elected to parliament and thereupon released. Hitler remained in prison, writing *Mein Kampf* as he says — another untruth. Hitler being in prison, Gregor Strasser took over the leadership of the entire party, including North Germany, whither it had now spread through the recruitment, *en masse*, of the *Völkische* movement of Graefe.

One of Gregor Strasser's first actions was to expel the clown Julius Streicher from the party, which he then proceeded to organize and expand. He was its head, and remained its real head for some time, even after Hitler's release from prison, for two good reasons. First, Hitler, though free, was forbidden to speak throughout the whole of North Germany, and could not have taken part in the work for this reason. Second, and this shows the financial plight of the men who made Hitler's party for him, Gregor Strasser, as a Reichstag Deputy, held the coveted free-railway-pass which enabled him to travel to and from Berlin without cost, and this was vitally important. Hitler, as an Austrian, could not, even if he would, have been returned to Parliament, and this is another example of his stupendous luck, for in open debate he would so quickly have been routed, that his rise to power and triumph would have been almost inconceivable; the myth would have been shattered too soon.

Hitler was a discredited and almost forgotten man. Gregor Strasser, far more popular, much better understood, was the leader of the National Socialist Party. But Hitler had one great source of strength. He was the only one of them all with any money. This he obtained from big-business magnates and other interested parties behind the scenes, by selling out piecemeal, in private parleys, the Socialist parts of the National Socialist programme, to which the Strassers and their friends attached vital importance. But that only became known much later.

Otto Strasser, after that Munich Putsch, gingerly began to feel the political waters again with one toe by writing leading articles under a pseudonym for the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Now his brother Gregor came to him and renewed his urgent appeals. 'We are independent in North Germany now', he said, 'and we can give the party substance and meaning, a countenance and an ideology. Now, *lieber Otto*, you will have to help me. WE will make and mould this party.'

In this way, Otto Strasser, the revolutionary Socialist in persistent search of revolutionary Socialism, joined the National Socialist Party in 1925. Not Hitler, the political foundling without a clean page in his record, but the two Strassers, men of clear ideas and unimpeachable history, were at that time the real leaders of the party. Believing that he had found the political haven where he fain would be, Otto Strasser set to work.

CHAPTER 6

HEIL AND FAREWELL

FIVE years passed from that day when Otto Strasser, joined the Heil-Hitlerists to the day when he bade Hitler farewell, telling him to his face that he was a windbag, a fraud and a humbug, and resumed his lonely fight for a German, revolutionary, Socialism. (Neither he nor his brother Gregor, incidentally, ever used the form of address, 'Mein Führer', in speaking to Hitler. They were both men of sturdy and independent character and called him 'Herr Hitler' to the end.)

These five years were filled with the struggle between the Strassers and Hitler for the power within the National Socialist Party, for the power in Germany. They did not see the struggle in that light, they did not feel themselves to be working *against* Hitler. They only saw that Hitler was betraying the things he claimed to represent, the promises he had made, and sought to bring him back to them. Inevitably, the men who thought as they did grouped themselves around the Strassers. But they did not consciously struggle for *power*, only for the soul of Hitler and the principles of the party.

This conflict of itself developed into a struggle for power, because Hitler was not interested in principles he had proclaimed to catch votes; they were for him not principles at all, but tactics, and he implacably sought to get rid of any who tried, by pinning him to principles, to cramp what he regarded as tactics.

In this way he came to look upon all men who had really believed in the professed tenets of National Socialism as his enemies, as intriguing foes within the walls, and he turned on them, to destroy them. But these men naturally resisted, feeling that they were right and that he was wrong, or misled. They had invested time, money, strength and idealism in the party, and would not give way or allow themselves to be brusquely elbowed aside. In this way, the struggle became one for power.

It ended in the triumph of Hitler and the rout of the Strassers. Otto Strasser seems to me to-day, when I look back upon those years in Germany, to be the only man among all the leading National Socialists who both saw that Hitler was a cheap cheat, and had the courage to say so and take up the struggle against him.

Even his brother Gregor seems never quite to have discerned this truth. His loyalty to Hitler survived all tests, and his persistent argument, in his innumerable discussions with the disbelieving Otto, was that 'the horse is bucking, certainly, but it is going the right way and we shall contrive to stay on it', to which Otto invariably replied: 'You are wrong; the horse is not bucking, but travelling in the wrong direction, and we cannot alter that'.

Gregor had an easy-going streak in his pugnacious nature which always led him, in the decisive moment, to give way to Hitler, and this affected the course of European history. For if he had broken away from Hitler with his brother, the National Socialist Party would certainly have split, and Germany and Europe would have been spared the militarist nightmare in which they now live; or, even if the party had not split, the claim-to-the-succession of the two Strassers, to-day, would be irresistible. The one Strasser alone, Otto, has a much harder and longer way to travel, but he is well in the running.

The whole dispute around which this quarrel and struggle revolved was the old, old doubt which had filled Otto Strasser until the day when the forces of reaction fired on Hitler at Munich — whether Hitler would be true to his Socialist professions, whether he really meant to lead Germany to a new social order and to a German Socialism, or whether he was the catspaw of the old, embattled ruling classes in Germany, big business and big landownership.

After five years with Hitler, Otto Strasser was confirmed and strengthened in the doubts he had felt before 1923, and in 1930 he accepted the logical consequence of this — he bade Hitler farewell.

His brother, easy going, not yet convinced and loth to abandon a loyalty, wandered on at Hitler's side, filled with inward misgivings, loth to break away, and saw Otto Strasser's words come true when Hitler came to power. But this was too late; Gregor was then a broken and a doomed man. Otto, clearer-sighted and more resolute, though less of a great popular figure, had cut the hawser in time, and lives to pursue his mission — that of avenging Germany and of avenging Gregor Strasser, The story of those five years, between his half-convinced, still doubting, surrender to Gregor Strasser's persuasions, and his final breakaway is therefore more that of a direct conflict between Hitler and Otto Strasser, with Gregor continually trying to make them link arms, than between Hitler and the two Strassers. This gives Otto Strasser his claim to attention to-day, and his eligibility to a big part in the future.

For he was right; Gregor was wrong; and Hitler was wrong, or rather Hitler is so mendacious a man that we do not know yet whether he was wrong or not, because we do not know, and perhaps never shall know, what he really wanted. In any case, the struggle was joined between him and Otto Strasser. Between them, placatory, stood Gregor Strasser. In the background, sometimes advancing to the front of the stage to put in a word or two or do a little stiletto-stuff, moved other figures — the malignant hobgoblin Goebbels; the Falstaffian but vindictive Göring; the bespectacled bosom-snake Himmler.

Five stormy years!

When Otto Strasser joined his brother Gregor, and became Hitler's liege, Gregor was the real head of the party in the vital and largest area of the Reich — North Germany — from which Hitler was barred.[1]

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[1] In the German Republic of those days, the various states had substantial independent powers. Prussia was bigger than all the other sixteen states together; having 38,000,000 inhabitants of a total of 62,000,000 and an area of 113,000 square miles of a total area of 181,000, Prussia comprised over three-fifths of the entire Reich. Prussia and other North German states had at that time banned Hitler, as a once-convicted Putschist, from entering their territory, so that his activity was in practice restricted to the largest South German state of Bavaria, with 7,500,000 inhabitants. The political battle, however, was naturally waged first and foremost in North Germany, particularly Prussia,

The party was in a bad way — the ignominious collapse of the Munich adventure lay but eighteen months behind it — and the two Strassers set diligently to work to reinvigorate it. Gregor took as his personal, paid assistant an unknown man, the sycophantic dwarf who later, at his downfall, was to prance around him with waspish jeers and taunts, Doctor Joseph Goebbels. The Strassers began their work by issuing the National Socialist News-Letters, published for the officials of the party only, and in these the principles and doctrine of the Socialist, or Strasser, wing of the party were expounded and developed.

The 'fight against Munich', that is, the fight between the tactician Hitler in Munich and the convinced Socialists Gregor and Otto Strasser in Berlin, dominated the life of the party at this time, and Goebbels, with

which was not only preponderant in size and population but also contained the capital, the seat of the Reich Government, and that of the powerful Prussian Government. Because he was thus unable to conduct his campaign on what was actually the battleground – Prussia – Hitler delegated the leadership there to Gregor Strasser (in this narrative the term 'North Germany', as indicating the area of Gregor Strasser's authority, for practical purposes may be taken to mean Prussia, although other small states in the North were also included). This meant that Gregor Strasser, although nominally Hitler's representative, was in a position of enormous power in the party throughout the greater part of the Reich. As his views differed from those of Hitler in essential principles, this led to a state of conflict between Gregor Strasser, at the head of the party in North Germany, and Hitler in Munich, and the history of his party's struggle for power and ultimate triumph cannot be understood without a knowledge of this simultaneous struggle between Gregor Strasser, supported by his brother Otto, and Hitler. It was actually a struggle for the soul of the party. Some years later, the ban on Hitler's appearance in Prussia and North Germany was lifted. Gregor Strasser's personal hold on the party was then gradually broken, by means which will be shown in the course of this narrative. The final encounter came on the eve of the attainment of power on January 30th, 1933, when the policy advocated by Gregor Strasser was rejected in favour of that recommended by Göring, and Gregor Strasser's rivals in the party, Göring and Goebbels chief among them, accused Strasser, to Hitler, of treachery. His relegation and disgrace followed; and his murder on June 30th, 1934, was the sequel, and the closing act in the drama.

[*facing*: **GREGOR STRASSER**

his talent for telling rhetorical thrusts, took a leading part in it on the Strasser side. Suspicion and distrust of Hitler were widespread, and the conflict blazed into open flame at the famous 'Leaders' Meeting' at Hanover in October 1925, which was called to concert measures for improving and strengthening the party organization throughout Northern Germany, and for removing dissensions. It was attended by such notable Nazi leaders of to-day as Viktor Lutze, the present Brown Army Commander; Rust, the Schools Minister; Kerrl, the Church Minister; Robert Ley, the Labour Front Leader; Hildebrandt, the Mecklenburg Statthalter; and of course the two Strassers and Goebbels.

Hitler, banned from North Germany, sent to it a representative, Gottfried Feder. The meeting developed into an open expression of dissatisfaction with Hitler, and one resolution after another was passed which clearly showed this feeling.

The meeting was unanimous, save for Dr. Ley, who repeatedly protested that resolutions and decisions taken without reference to Hitler were invalid, whereon Rust exclaimed, 'We will not tolerate a Pope in our party', and Goebbels proposed that Hitler should be expelled. Gregor Strasser tactfully slurred over these things, stating that he was not a candidate against Hitler for the leadership, but was concerned to improve the organization in North Germany, which had been entrusted to him.

The conference then resolved that all North German branches of the party should be amalgamated in a single North German organization under Gregor Strasser; that all officials of the North German party must look to the

Strasser News-Letters for their political guidance; that a publishing house should be founded in Berlin, under Gregor and Otto Strasser, which would take over all publicity and press work for the party in North Germany. Further, it was resolved, and this was vital, that the political programme (for 'real German Socialism') drawn up by the Strassers was accepted, and the entire body of North German leaders, save Ley, pledged themselves to vote, at the next National Congress of the entire party, for this programme to be substituted for the famous, but obsolete and imprecise, 'Twenty-Five Points' taken over by Hitler from the little party he had bought out, with Röhm's money, in Munich in 1919.

These Twenty-Five Points were adopted by Hitler as his programme and he had always refused to allow any discussion of them. He had, however, added a rider, which was in effect an annulment, to one of the most important of them, that which demanded the break-up of big estates for settlement purposes. This modification was made by him as a concession to big-business and big-landownership interests with which he was, so long ago, already in privy negotiation. This demand for the expropriation of land, however, was one of the most important things in the Twenty-Five Points, and one of those which justified the claim of the party to the name National *Socialist.* Its emendation made Hitler most suspect to such men as Otto Strasser. As this conflict of ideas and ideals between Hitler and the Strassers, between the convinced National *Socialists* and the merely power-seeking men in the party, plays a great part in the whole German development until the present day, and in the story which this book has to tell, I have reproduced the Twenty-Five Points as an appendix (page 340), for comparison with Otto Strasser's programme of 'A German Socialism' which is explained in a subsequent chapter.

The Hanover meeting, with its rebuff to Hitler, its endorsement of the Socialist part of the National Socialist programme, and its declaration of allegiance to Gregor Strasser, was thus a triumph for the two Strassers and their doctrines. It was followed immediately by their discomfiture, the first of the setbacks which ultimately led to Otto Strasser's breakaway from Hitler and to Gregor Strasser's dismissal and murder. Hitler outmanœuvred them in this manner.

On receiving Feder's report from Hanover, he called a counter-meeting of all South German leaders at Bamberg, and invited the North German leaders, Strasser's men, to attend. None of them went, because at this time politics was an expensive spare-time luxury for these men, most of whom were living on the edge of poverty or had businesses which they could not leave; even the fare was a serious obstacle.

Only Gregor Strasser, who had his famous free-railway-pass, and Goebbels, who had 200 marks a month from Strasser, attended. Goebbels there first saw Hitler. He saw more. He saw Hitler's host of salaried officials from the embryo Brown House in Munich (Hitler was getting money from the magnates) and he saw swarms of Hitler's motor cars. He mentally contrasted this with the poverty-stricken picture of the North German leaders' meeting and with his own paltry 200 marks a month.

Thereon, Goebbels decided that he had been standing on his bad leg and shifted his weight on to the good one. In sonorous and repentant tones, he declared that he could not associate himself further with the decisions of Hanover, whither he had called for the expulsion of Hitler.

Gregor Strasser was left isolated. His own supporters were absent. Goebbels had publicly betrayed him. He was poor; Hitler had the money. He shrugged his shoulders and accepted defeat.

He was left at the head of the North German organization, because Hitler was not allowed in North Germany anyway, but Hitler refused to discuss the Strasser programme. The Twenty-Five Points were restored to their place as the official programme of the party.

From that day dated the deadly enmity between the Strassers and Goebbels, which may yet see a spectacular issue. Goebbels, purring, left the meeting in Hitler's motor car. Max Amann, the head of Hitler's Eher Publishing House, gazed curiously at him and murmured to Hitler: 'This is the Mephisto of our party.'

As an instance of the kind of issue which agitated opinion within the party in those days, and led to such dissensions, I may mention that the dispute about the confiscation of the property of the former reigning dynasties was in progress. On the ground that war-disabled men, inflation victims and others had had no compensation, the Strassers, and the bulk of the party were for confiscation; Hitler, who was bargaining with the magnates behind the scenes, was against it.

Nevertheless, the Strassers resumed the struggle in

North Germany, and Gregor persuaded Otto, as Goebbels had left him, to give up his job in Count von Hertling's concern and devote all his time to the party. This happened at the beginning of 1926. With the money he received as compensation for surrendering a contract which still had two and a half years to run, Otto Strasser founded the North German publishing house, the Kampfverlag, and began to publish National Socialist newspapers in Berlin and throughout North Germany.

In the years 1926-28 the entire North German section of the National Socialist Party was inspired by and controlled through the Kampfverlag, of which the Strassers and a third partner, Hinkel, held the shares in equal parts. It was bigger than Hitler's own publishing house, the Eherverlag, at Munich. Through it, the great struggle for the mind of Germany was waged, a struggle of ideas, of organization, of publicity and of finance, a battle between Munich and Berlin, between Hitler and the Strassers, between Eherverlag and Kampfverlag.

In 1927 Hitler delivered his great blow, one which was eventually to prove fatal to the Strassers.

Looking round for an instrument to use against the Strassers, whose incorrigible convictions hampered his tactical ideas, he picked on Goebbels, the penitent of Bamberg, the detested enemy of the two brothers in Berlin. Goebbels he made Regional Leader of the party in Berlin, in 1927, and instructed him to begin publication of a newspaper, the *Angriff*, rival to those issued by the Kampfverlag. His mission was to be a thorn in the Strasser side.

It was a curious position. Otto Strasser, who held no party office, was formally entitled to publish the official party organ for Berlin; Goebbels, who was the party leader in Berlin, published a non-official paper in competition with it. Gregor Strasser was Hitler's deputy, the National Socialist leader for all North Germany; Goebbels was made leader for Berlin in order to undermine and overthrow him. This was one of the earlier examples of Hitler's methods of attaining his ends.

For three years, from 1927 to 1930, the vendetta was pursued with tremendous bitterness, at first behind the scenes, then in the open. The vendors of the rival newspapers fought each other in the streets, while the Socialists and Communists laughed and rubbed their hands; but in this feud Goebbels had the advantage, for he was the commander of the Berlin Storm Troops.

One day, Hitler himself came to Otto Strasser's well-appointed office in the Nürnbergerstrasse and tried to induce him voluntarily to suspend publication of his newspaper, which preached National *Socialism*, the *Berliner Arbeiterzeitung*. Strasser answered: 'Why should I? We were first in the field. Our papers have appeared for years. We have the official party authorization to publish. We did the spadework and broke the ground. The party and its press are now thriving, thanks to our work. Tell Goebbels to stop publication of *his* paper.'

Hitler answered: 'This is not a question of right, but of might. Goebbels has the Storm Troops, and what can you do if twenty Storm Troopers come here one day and smash the place up?'

Otto Strasser opened his drawer, laid his revolver on the table — I said before that he loves this gesture — and said, 'Herr Hitler, in that case you will have eight Storm Troopers the less'. Hitler shouted: 'But you can't shoot my SA men!' Said Otto Strasser: 'I thought you said they were Goebbels's SA men. If they are yours, you can stop them. Anyway, I'll shoot anybody who breaks in here with the intention of attacking me.'

'We should have broken openly with Hitler then', says Otto Strasser. 'That was the right moment, and we were in a very strong position. But Gregor always wanted to avoid the open conflict. He thought we should win in the end anyway, and should appear to give way by transferring our offices outside Berlin.'

Between 1929 and 1930 the rise of the party was so rapid that the Kampfverlag grew rapidly, and had to make daily papers out of several of its weekly papers. The friction with Hitler and Goebbels consequently increased. At last Hitler sent for the three partners in the Kampfverlag, the two Strassers and Hinkel, to come to Munich. (Hinkel is to-day Reich Commissioner for the Jewish Question, having retained Hitler's favour through his subsequent compliance in this matter.)

'Hitler behaved like a madman. He shrieked and roared at us, and then flattered us. He offered to buy the Kampfverlag from us at any price we liked to name, and offered Hinkel and myself deputy's seats in the Reichstag. [A deputy's seat in Germany was a fairly profitable thing.] Gregor was ready to sell, but his share was only a third. I refused point blank and contrived to get Hinkel to refuse also. The conversation lasted many hours and at times was conducted in a Bedlam-like atmosphere. At one point I remarked mildly, "You are mistaken, Herr Hitler", whereon Hitler shouted, "I cannot err, everything that I do and say is history".'

The tension approached explosion point. At last the breach came. The immediate cause was a metalworkers' strike in Saxony.

The Strassers and the North German section of the party supported the strikers, and the official order of the party to its members was 'strike'. The Employers' Federation then sent an ultimatum to Hitler that it would cut off its contributions to his exchequer unless the strike order were at once countermanded. Hitler ordered the Saxon Branch of the party to countermand the strike order and instruct its members not to take part. The National Socialist Leader for Saxony, Mutschmann, gave way, but the Strassers held fast, and the official press of the party urged the workers to continue the strike. Thus, the open conflict broke out — in the spring of 1930.

Hitler came to Berlin and had two long and stormy meetings with Otto Strasser, who suffered at them from his old handicap — Gregor had begged him not to provoke a split, because in that event he would stay with Hitler. Gregor's motive was always the same; he believed that the National Socialist movement was good and that the only fault was one of tactics, which could later be corrected; he did not believe that anything fundamental was wrong with the party. Otto took the opposite view.

These two encounters with Hitler are of great interest. Otto Strasser recorded them immediately afterwards, as literally as he could remember them, and published them in his *Aufbau des Deutschen Sozialismus* (Structure of German Socialism) in 1931.

Thus for many years the record of those two terrific conversations has been on record and in print, available to all who wanted to study the man Hitler. To-day the accounts of his hysterical orgasms in such conversations come from all sides. Ambassadors, who formerly counted among his admirers, publish them. His former lieutenants publish them. Mental specialists all agree that this man is mad. The peers who wooed him all agree that this man is mad. Everybody agrees, quite suddenly, that this man is mad.

Why? He has not done anything now that he did not do, repeatedly, in the seven preceding years of his might — save the pact with the Bolshevists. He has not said anything now that he did not say over and over again in those years and long before. He has touched no summit of delirium that then was beyond his reach.

Here, in these two protracted wrangles with Otto Strasser ten years ago, you find it all — the shouting and screaming, the half-witted jargon — like a low music-hall comedian caricaturing a diehard major of the most exaggerated type — even the threats and the ultimatum.

On the one side, Otto Strasser, who wanted a straight answer on an issue of major political importance. On the other side, the cheapjack ranting of Hitler, who pulverized the clearest question and the most logical argument alike with shouted retorts of 'Marxism', 'Bolshevism', 'Democratic bunkum', 'Nonsense' and so on. There it all is, the same picture, in every detail, with which the world has become familiar since the outbreak of war.

Nowadays, people think: ‘Of course, a man who behaves like that is clearly irresponsible, a public danger. If the world had only known’. But the world could have known. It could have known from this account of Otto Strasser’s of his two-day struggle with Hitler. But it did not want to know. Strasser’s narrative would even have been discounted, as exaggerated, by anybody who took the trouble to read it. To-day, the world has become sufficiently familiar with Hitler to know that it is a lifelike portrait, true in every detail.

It is, indeed, the first such portrait, painted long before Hitler came to power, at a time when the world was only languidly interested in Hitler and did not believe in his capacity to do the harm he has done. It is strange that it did not attract attention later, when Hitler had come to power, and any fifth-rate gutter-journalist from Berlin could go abroad, to England or America, and publish the ‘inside story’ of Hitler. Here *was* the inside story, and nobody bothered to read it.

I believe Strasser’s book, containing the account of these two conversations, has never been translated; at any rate it has never appeared in English. If any foreign statesman, having the interests of his country really at heart, had wished to learn what sort of a man Hitler was, he could have found all he needed here. A statesman who had read these pages would not, unless he were incorrigibly wooden-headed and blind to his country’s interests, have found himself years later talking about ‘that eternal tendency to suspect Herr Hitler which unfortunately only breeds counter-suspicion’, or suchlike twaddle.

Here he would have found, if he wished to know it, the true picture of Hitler. A thimblerigger, a three-card-trickster, a mountebank who sought to make his trashy wares look genuine by shouting them ever more loudly, as does the ranting cheapjack at the fair, a man without truth, honour or loyalty, a third-rank political swindler destined through intrigue to be borne to the loftiest heights of power.

His adversary, in those days, was a man who believed in certain *things* and wished to attain power in Germany in order to bring them about; Hitler, as these conversations show, believed in nothing, but thought these certain *things* worth professing as a means to attain power, when he meant to do something quite different.

The two men are as different as night and day, as thief and honest man, as renegade and patriot. The greatest renegades, in all countries, are those who shout their patriotism loudest, bawl their national anthem loudest, clamour loudest that they will not sheathe the sword in wars in which they do not fight, cry loudest for that patriotic conscription which will not conscript themselves.

Hitler, in this understanding of the word, is the greatest patriot of all time, a worthy crony of those in other countries who sang his praises and propped him up until he could plunge Europe in war again, and then, in their pure patriotism, began chanting 'the man is mad, we must finish with him, send the young men away to finish with him, down with him'.

He deserves, and they deserve, an honoured place in the Valhalla of such patriots. They are the men who have made Europe what Europe is, and if you like it, you like it. If only, one day, we could have just one settling of accounts with these renegades. If they have their way, they will soon be betraying us again, with and through Göring.

Such men enabled Hitler, this cesspool-product Hitler, the greatest traitor and renegade that Germany ever had, for years to pose and be accepted as a German patriot, of all ludicrous things. By similar means, men in Britain who should be pilloried as renegades are able to pose, not for years, but for decades, with the halo of a shining patriotism encircling their heads.

I shall give long extracts from the two conversations here because they so clearly illuminate the theme of this book, the method by which renegades-called-patriots succeed ever and again in bringing about war in Europe, and the characters of the two men called Adolf Hitler and Otto Strasser. For many years after the publication of these conversations, such is the level of intelligence in Europe, it was possible to present Hitler, because he was entirely and cynically and avowedly self-seeking and without any feeling for the welfare of Germany, as a patriot: Otto Strasser, because he had precisely this feeling for the welfare of Germany, and was not self-seeking, and clung to his convictions, as an anti-patriot and 'Red'; to this appalling extent is the public opinion of Europe, and particularly of Britain, slave to the millionaire-owned newspapers whose mission, as it believes in its purblindness, is to inform.

The theme of these two long verbal rencounters is the old, old dispute. Strasser asks quietly again and again, in a dozen different ways, 'Are you for Socialism; do you mean what you say; have you the ideal of a better social order in view; or are all these only phrases which you use to catch votes; is power your only real aim?'

Hitler, in reply, rants, rails, and roars: 'I am the anointed of Heaven, you are an intellectual crank' (do you remember those sergeant-majors whom Otto Strasser so loathes from his recruit days?), 'I know what is best, what you say is the purest Marxist-Bolshevist-Liberal-Democratic-Socialist-Communist-Red muck'. (It is not I, but Hitler, who marries the adjective 'pure' with 'muck'; he does it continually; he would.)

These are not direct quotations, but they give the picture. The contest is between a man of convictions, ideals, and logical mind; and a liar who believes in nothing and is prepared to use any means to counter an argument, crush an adversary, or bring about a war.

On the one side of the table sits a man of clear thought and convictions who can pungently put and counter an argument; on the other, a ridiculous tub-thumper, vain as a peacock, who can produce no answer to a direct question but a string of meaningless catchwords, who is thrown into hysterical paroxysms by any simple interrogation, because he knows himself to be a liar, and who clearly shows that he has no ideals or convictions whatever, that he is only for the means and leaves the end to look after itself.

These meetings took place on May 21st and 22nd, 1930. The first began with the familiar tirade — Hitler's technique never changes, from Otto Strasser in 1930 to Kurt von Schuschnigg in 1938 and Sir Nevile Henderson in 1939 — of shouted reproaches and threats, on account of the tone taken in the publications of the Kampfverlag, culminating in a demand for the immediate dissolution of that publishing house, or else . . . But when Otto Strasser rose and quietly said he had come for a discussion and was not prepared to listen to an ultimatum, Hitler, as ever, became calm and friendly, and the talk began.

The battle was joined with Hitler's objections to criticisms made in Strasser's papers about the appointment, by the first National Socialist Minister, Dr. Frick, in Thuringia, of one Schulze-Naumburg to a high post in the realm of art. Strasser replied that the younger generation of artists of National Socialist sympathies held this gentleman to represent the wax-flowers-under-a-glass-bowl period in art and had the right to state its opinion. Hitler's rejoinder began, 'Everything you say proves that you have no idea of art. There is no such thing as an "older generation" or a "younger generation" in art, there is only art, and particularly Greek-Nordic art'. Strasser interjected another view and mentioned 'Chinese and Egyptian art as an expression of the souls of those peoples'. Hitler answered: 'What you say is the most obsolete Liberalism. There is no such thing as Chinese or Egyptian art, only Nordic-Greek art. . . .'

The conversation begun on this level remained on the same level throughout. Hitler's next reproach was against an article which, as he complained, 'differentiated between the Idea of National Socialism and the Führer, and even put the Idea higher than the Führer'.

Strasser, while disclaiming any disrespect for Hitler, said he held precisely that view. A Führer 'might become ill, or die, or conceivably deviate from the Idea; but an Idea was of divine origin, and eternal'.

This, said Hitler, was 'bombastic nonsense hatched out at a debating table, and the worst sort of democratic bunkum. The Führer and the Idea were one, and every National Socialist must obey the orders of the Führer, who embodied the Idea and alone knew its ultimate aim'.

'That, Herr Hitler,' said Otto Strasser quietly, 'is the doctrine of Rome, and both of Papist and of Fascist Rome. For me, the Idea is the vital thing, the Idea of National Socialism, and my conscience decides when a gap appears between Führer and Idea.'

Hitler simply cannot stand this sort of stuff; people who talk like that are for him 'intellectual cranks', and a kindly providence alone prevented the meeting from being ended by a stroke at this point. But he knew the age-old answer to this one: discipline! 'You are talking rank democracy,' he said, 'and this would lead to the break-up of our party, which is based on discipline, and I don't intend to have the party destroyed by a few conceited scribblers. Do you intend to submit yourself to this discipline, as your brother does, or not?'

Thus, at a very early stage in an argument that lasted the best part of two days, Hitler fell back on the age-old retort of 'patriots', of this kidney; 'You have put a question which I am unable to answer. I must remind you of the necessity for discipline. Yours is not to reason why, yours is to do as I tell you in the unquestioning belief that I am always right. Where should we be if you began to wonder whether I *am* always right. This would be intolerable. You might then want to go in a different direction, even in a better direction, than the one I want you to go. This is pure Bolshevism. Pure, I repeat, Bolshevism. Gad, sir, discipline! Only discipline can bring you where I want to go.'

Here, again, the resemblance to those encounters with the parade-ground buffoons of 1914, whom Otto Strasser so detests, is striking. 'Conceited intellectuals.' 'Conceited scribblers.' 'Piano-players to the left, those who speak French or English to the right. Now then, the conceited intellectuals who speak French or English can go and clean the closets.'

Strasser replied that he knew a deal about discipline from the war, and not discipline, but conscience and a sense of duty alone had carried him and many others like him through the last bitter months. He begged Hitler not to be deluded by the cheap plaudits of the creatures about him. . . .

Hitler interrupted: 'I forbid such defamation of my collaborators.'

Strasser replied: 'Herr Hitler, we need not try to fool each other. How few of these collaborators are mentally able to form their own opinion, and how few even of these have the spirit to state it, if it differs from yours. Or do you believe that my brother would be so well-disciplined if he were not financially dependent on you, through his deputy's seat?'

Thereupon Hitler invited Strasser to follow his brother's example and offered him the post of Press

Chief of the party if he would come to Munich and work under his, Hitler's, supervision. Strasser said he could only do that if they agreed about the fundamental principles of policy — about the Idea, in fact — and first an exhaustive discussion of all questions, particularly those of foreign policy and Socialism, would be necessary; to that end he would be ready to come to Munich for four weeks and thrash these matters out with Hitler, and with Alfred Rosenberg, whose enmity, as that of the spiritual prompter of the National Socialist Party, he felt keenly.

Now came the ultimatum, in the same form that it later came in the interviews with Chancellor von Schuschnigg, and President Hacha, and many others. 'Proposals of this sort,' said Hitler, 'are too late. My patience is exhausted.'

And he threatened, if Otto Strasser did not give an immediate decision about the offer for a Press Chief's post, irrespective of his convictions or the promises of the party, to expel him and all his associates from the party and to sever all connection between the party and the Kampfverlag. Here was the same method which was later to be used in annexing countries. Otto Strasser was threatened with bankruptcy, but he would be spared if he took a bribe. Schuschnigg was threatened with invasion, but would himself have been spared if he had 'legalized' it by appealing for it.

Strasser answered that Hitler undoubtedly had the means to carry out his threats, but in doing this he would confirm Otto Strasser's suspicions, that his real motive was a fundamental antagonism to the Socialist doctrine which the Kampfverlag, in accordance with

Hitler's and the party's promises, had preached for five years, and that this was the real reason why Hitler wished to destroy the Kampfverlag, its publications and its influence over the North German group of the National Socialist Party: he wished to be rid of it in order to collaborate with the Right and the reactionaries.

Hitler violently repudiated these insinuations (which were, in fact, the truth). Of course, he was a Socialist, he said, but a different kind of Socialist from Otto Strasser. The whole trouble was, that Otto Strasser did not understand these things. 'I am a far better Socialist, for instance, than your wealthy Count Reventlow' (Count Reventlow, a former naval officer, was at this time a supporter of Strasser's but afterwards seceded to Hitler). 'Even to-day, I cannot bear to see my chauffeur eating anything different from myself.'

This was a curious argument, for very few chauffeurs would be likely to covet what Hitler eats. But it shows what some people understand by Socialism, when they wish to. Hitler continued:

'What you mean by Socialism is rank Marxism. The great bulk of the workers want nothing but bread and circuses; they have no use for "ideals" and we can never count on winning over large numbers of them.'

To read these words, is to understand the sympathy that Hitler so long enjoyed, indeed until he made that pact with Bolshevy, among the ruling classes in Britain. They, too, admire Socialism, within limits, and Hitler, in this answer, precisely defines these limits.

'We want a hand-picked new ruling class,' said Hitler, 'one not moved, as you are moved, by love-my-fellow-man feelings, but one that clearly realizes that its superior race gives it the right to rule, and one that will ruthlessly maintain and ensure this rule over the masses.'

Otto Strasser, with a tenacity that commands respect, repeatedly sought to bring the conversation back to an intelligible level and to get down to an exchange of clear questions and answers about specific problems.

'Herr Hitler', he said, 'I am staggered by these views of yours. I hold your racial theories to be entirely false. In my view, the "race" is but the original raw material, and in the case of the German people four or five races contributed to make this. Political, climatic and other influences, together with pressure from without and assimilation within, made of this mixture a people; and the processes of history evolved the third and highest form, that which we call "a nation", which in our case was born in August 1914. Your racial theories would deny that the German people *is* a nation. They deny that which I hold to be the task and meaning of the coming German revolution.'

Said Hitler: 'What you say is pure Liberalism. There *are* no other revolutions but racial revolutions. There are no economic, political or social revolutions, there is but the struggle of the racially inferior lower class against the ruling upper race.'

This interesting passage throws a new light on Hitler's theories. Put this way, his ideas would be universally acceptable to exploiters the world over, as much to Jews as to any others. It contains, indeed, no mention whatever of Jews, this utterance of the year 1930 by the arch anti-Semite who so often used Jews as his agents. It is, indeed, an entirely new conception of race, even stranger than that which has currently passed as his conception of it. It is that the poor are not only a lower *class* but an inferior *race*; while the rich, are not only predestined to *rule*, but are also a superior *race*. This is the best racial theory ever invented, in my recollection, and if only Hitler had made this clear to the world earlier, and had kept that stupid stuff about the Jews out of the argument, he would, in my opinion, be the adored ruler of Europe to-day. Not even the pact with Bolshevy could have shaken him — if he had propounded this fascinating doctrine earlier.

'You, Herr Strasser', roared Hitler further, beating the table with his fists until it danced, 'do not understand these racial matters. Precisely because you lack this knowledge of race, your foreign policy is so wrong. For instance, you have often spoken openly in favour of the so-called Indian freedom movement, although this is obviously nothing but a rebellion of the inferior Indian races against the high-quality English-Nordic race. The Nordic race has a right to rule the world and we must make this right the guiding star of our foreign policy.'

It is really sad that Otto Strasser's book, containing the record of these conversations, did not become widely known years ago, and that Hitler was thus deprived of the honorary memberships of the Simla, Bombay and Calcutta clubs which would inevitably have been conferred on him if these lovely words had reached the outer world. In the next sentence he continued in like vein:

'For these reasons, we can never go together with

Soviet Russia, where a Jewish head rests on Slav-Tartar body. I know the Slavs from my own homeland. Earlier, when a Germanic head sat on the Slav body, co-operation with Russia was feasible, and Bismarck did this. To-day it would be simply a crime.'

Otto Strasser replied that he could not understand such views in foreign politics. The only thing that would count with him was, whether this or that line in foreign policy would benefit or harm Germany; in the first case, he held it to be the right line, and the State in question could be as repugnant to him personally as it wished; in the second case, he held it to be the wrong line, without regard to the depth of his personal liking for the State concerned and its people.

Germany's most vital aim in foreign policy was, in his opinion, to throw off the Versailles Treaty, and in the search for powers whose course might lie parallel with hers in that direction, for no matter how short a distance, he found only Italy and Russia. For that reason he held collaboration with Italy to be wise, though the Italians did not attract him, and he even held collaboration with Russia to be theoretically possible, though Bolshevism was as antipathetic to him as Fascism; where the interests of Germany were at stake, M. Stalin and Signor Mussolini, Mr. MacDonald and M. Poincaré were all one to him.

A conversation which had already lasted long and continually threatened on Hitler's side to degenerate into an unintelligible babble then continued with a speech of Hitler's about 'the coming Nordic-Germanic rule in Europe' and Strasser asked for it to be interrupted and continued the next day. Optimist that he is, he also asked that it should then be devoted to the question that particularly interested him — Socialism, as he understood it.

When the two antagonists met the next day, Strasser got his blow in first. He had prepared a lengthy explanation of his Socialist views and of the way to apply them in practice, and delivered himself of this, in order to nail Hitler to a clear statement of intentions.

'Do you agree with me,' said Strasser to Hitler, 'that the overthrow of the existing regime, which we are mutually working for, should be a complete revolution in the political, economic and spiritual fields, a revolution which must be brought about and carried through by all methods? That means, that we must be equally implacable and hostile in our attitude towards capitalism and towards international Marxism. And this is the main question at issue in our conversation to-day — that our campaign should not be confined to the "struggle against Marxism" but should also be conducted as a struggle against Capitalism. But this demands clarity under the head, Private Property. My view is that the principle of "the inviolability of private property" excludes all possibility of German Socialism. It is of course my view that all civilization rests on property. But precisely because the material circumstances of a man govern his possibilities of developing his personality and evolving a manly and upright bearing, precisely because property is thus the basis of independence, is it necessary to give those eight-tenths of the German people who are to-day without property the possibility of acquiring property. In the capitalist system, they lack this possibility.'

'The position to-day,' continued Otto Strasser, 'is like that before the Wars of Liberation. At that time Baron von Stein wisely said: "If the nation is to achieve freedom and honour, it will be necessary to give the oppressed sections of this nation property and the right of co-determination." The oppressed classes were at that time the landless peasant-serfs. Then the need of the day was to carry through the liberation of the peasants; to-day, it is to carry through the liberation of the workers; just as the goal was achieved then by giving the peasants property and the right of co-determination, so must the workers be given property and the right of co-determination now. In agriculture, it was possible to use the method of individually-held property, because the land is capable of being divided into suitably small portions. In our modern industry, that is impossible; a factory cannot be divided into a lot of small undertakings. In this case, therefore, the method of collective-ownership is needed, and the title to this property should be held in a double right — as a member of the nation, and as a member of the working-community in that particular factory. But just as Baron von Stein had to take parts of their land from the big landowners in order to make the peasants property-owners — for then, as now, nothing was lying about ownerless — so must we to-day take from the present owners part of their monopoly-property and give it to the workers, or in a wider sense to the nation. The property-owners of that day called Baron von Stein a Jacobin, just as they call us Bolshevists to-day, but the liberation of Prussia would have been just as impossible without this reform as the liberation of Germany is to-day without the liberation of the German workers.'

Hitler interrupted, 'Your comparison is completely false. You cannot compare the complicated industrial mechanism of to-day with the German peasant-liberation. Land can of course be divided up and given to individuals, but not a modern factory.'

Strasser broke in to say that a great difference in matters of method of course existed, but his point was that the peasant-liberation, that unloosed the mighty forces which made the War of Liberation possible, would not have been possible if the principle of 'the inviolability of private property' had remained in force.

Hitler asked Strasser how he envisaged his share-out of property in a modern industrialized State, and Strasser answered that he thought the present owners should retain 49 per cent of the capital and profits of an undertaking, while the State should receive 41 per cent as the representative of the nation, and the workers the remaining 10 per cent; but the management of the concern, as embodied in the Supervisory Board, should be divided into equal shares of one-third each among the present owners, the State, and the workers, in order that the influence of the State in its actual conduct should be reduced.

Thus Otto Strasser, in his opening speech, developed, in broad outline, his theory of a German Socialism, which I shall describe more fully later in this book. It is not, as this quotation will show, that the present owners of property in Germany should be brusquely dispossessed in favour of the unpropertied masses; or that a super-capitalist called The State should be set up in place of the body of individual capitalists of to-day; but that the unpropertied eight-tenths of the German people should be admitted to co-ownership, co-management and co-responsibility.

The result of it all was, inevitably, that Hitler told Strasser: 'What you say is rank Marxism, it is just Bolshevism. You want to introduce the democratic system, which in politics has left us with a heap of ruins, into economic life and destroy it. You would undo the whole progress that has been made by mankind, which was always due to individual great men, to great inventors.'

It is astounding how this man, whose whole stock-in-trade seems to consist of a few phrases culled from the cheaper press of Viennese back streets, was able to dazzle and dominate his kind; how he was able to answer and annihilate practically any question with one of a dozen words: 'Marxism', 'Democracy', 'Liberalism', 'Intellectual', 'Scribbler', 'Bolshevism', 'Discipline'. Hardly an intelligible thought is to be found in his discourse, only a few which are comprehensible, but base.

Strasser answered the one about 'the progress of mankind' with the kind of remark that would spring to the lips of any non-cretin in a sane world. He is not a man to be overborne by phrases, but one who looks for the truth behind them, and he replied that he questioned the whole assumption about 'the progress of mankind' and by no means admitted 'that the invention of the water closet was a contribution to civilization'.

Hitler, whose every remark could be foretold by a school child of average intelligence after a six-weeks' correspondence course, answered: 'But you will not deny that mankind has undergone a gigantic development, from the Stone Age to the technical marvels of to-day, and that this entire development would be cut off by your hatched-at-a-writing-desk theories?'

Strasser, who respects the meaning of words, said he did not believe that *mankind* had *progressed*, but rather that mankind had remained unchanged for thousands of years. He asked mildly if Herr Hitler thought that Goethe had been mentally backward because he never travelled in a motor car, or Napoleon because he never listened to the radio?

Hitler answered that these were all 'arm-chair theories, and practical life daily proves the mighty progress of mankind, which receives its impulse from the achievements of individual great men'. (I once played a game, the winner of which was he who could answer the most questions with some fatuous remark in common daily use, such as 'The days are drawing in, aren't they?' Hitler should be a master of this, after a little practice.)

The one about the progress of mankind being the work of individual great men, however, let Otto Strasser in again, and he interjected pointedly that he did not accept this dogma about the part played by great leaders either, for man was neither the maker nor the inventor of historical epochs, but the tool of destiny.

Hitler looked at him with that suspicion-laden gaze born of Vienna back streets and interrupted him sharply, Even at that time Hitler was a master of every trick of intimidation; I remember how he tried to stare me down and sat staring at me for two or three minutes without opening his lips, when I once went to see him. But in those days he had not the backing which made intimidation so easy later — the biggest army in Europe. Now he asked Strasser, with bulging eyes and thunder-laden brow:

'Do you wish to insinuate that I am not the inventor of National Socialism?'

'Certainly I deny that,' said Strasser. 'I see National Socialism as an idea born of our times and planted by destiny in one form or another in hundreds of thousands of hearts. You have it in an exceptionally sharply defined form, but the simultaneity of its appearance, and the similarity of its form, shows that it is the fruit of a historical process. It is the same with the capitalist system; apart from its merits or demerits, it is "old" now, it is in decline, while the time of Socialism is coming and it will determine the history of the next 150 years'.

'What you call Socialism,' replied Hitler angrily, 'is just Marxism, and your whole ideas are just paper theories which have nothing to do with real life. By what right do the workers demand a part in ownership or even in management? Do you think my publisher here would allow his girl typist to tell him what to do? The employer provides his workers with bread. Our big industrialists are not concerned with making as much money as possible, with living as well as they can; responsibility and power are the things that matter for them. Their brains have brought them to the top, and this process of natural selection, which again proves their superior race, gives them a right to lead.'

It is strange now to think that these words, which would make any armaments-Croesus, sweated-workshop proprietor, brothel-keeper, bottle-party Levantine, company-promoter, dividend-lizard, or war-profiteer purr with pleasure, came from a man who succeeded in making millions of Germans think that he was moved by a burning will to abolish the social evils of our times.

I have quoted only parts of these two immense conversations, but enough to show their nature. At one point Otto Strasser did contrive to transfix Hitler with his pin and hold him down for a moment. 'What would you do, if you came to power in Germany to-morrow?' he said; 'what would you do about Krupps? Would everything remain unchanged in respect of shareholders and workers, ownership, profits and management?'

'Why, of course,' said Hitler contemptuously. 'Do you think I am mad enough to destroy the economic system?'

'Then, Herr Hitler,' said Otto Strasser, 'if you mean to maintain the capitalist system, you should not preach Socialism, for the members of our Party are in the first place Socialists and put their faith in the Party programme, which specifically demands the Socialization of jointly-owned concerns.' (Point No. 13 of the 25 Points.)

'The term Socialism,' said Hitler loftily, 'is bad in itself, but in any case the programme does not mean that such concerns *must* be Socialized, only that they *could* be Socialized if they acted in a way contrary to the interests of the nation. If they don't do that, it would be a crime to destroy the economic system.'

The conversations dragged on, but did not progress. Hitler stubbornly rejected all idea of co-ownership and co-management for the workers, and when Otto Strasser recalled the case of a famous lock-out in which, as he said, 'two or three dozen people, who were no better and no worse than their neighbours, had been able to put 250,000 Ruhr workmen on the street', Hitler said, 'I don't need the co-ownership or co-management of the workers to stop that sort of thing; a strong State can do that.'

The most important thing about these encounters with Hitler is that Otto Strasser did succeed in obtaining a clear negative in the matter that was vital for him — Socialism. More remarkable still, Hitler on this occasion and in this matter spoke the truth, which is very rare. Three years before he came to power, he was already willing, in such a discussion as this, to abandon all pretence in the matter of his Socialist promises and to show himself as a man of no political principle at all.

After these meetings, Otto Strasser's years of service in Hitler's Party quickly approached their end. The gap between 'Idea' and 'Führer' had become clear to see. Otto Strasser realized that his place, as he had told Hitler, was with the Idea, at no matter what cost to himself.

The open breach soon came. Hitler put into practice his threat to destroy Otto Strasser financially, to make him bankrupt, and to cast him out. He ordered Goebbels to get rid of Strasser by hook or by crook, and the little Doctor called a packed party meeting, which Strasser and his associates were prevented by various devices from attending, as rebels. Otto Strasser retaliated with a manifesto, published in his papers throughout North Germany, which were still the official organs of National Socialism. This was entitled 'The Socialists leave the National Socialist Party'.

A furious onslaught followed. Summoning to his aid his army of words and phrases, Hitler issued a scathing attack on Strasser, whom he denounced as a 'cheap scribbler' and 'parlour-Bolshevist' — the sergeant-major touch again.

Strasser retaliated by publishing, without comment, his official war record, and took this trick, for when the contest is one of facts, and not of phrases, Hitler must lose every time.

Hitler struck again, by expelling Otto Strasser and his followers throughout the country from the party. Only one position now remained — the Kampfverlag, which was still publishing the newspapers of Hitler's Party. Gregor Strasser had yielded and sold his third-share to Hitler; now, by the offer of a Reichstag seat, Hitler won over the second partner, Hinkel, who sold out. The Kampfverlag was Hitler's and he promptly closed it down.

Otto Strasser thus paid in cash also for his convictions, a thing few men do. His third share was lost; at the first attempt to buy the Kampfverlag, Hitler had offered each of the partners 80,000 marks, at that time £4000, for their share. Strasser was left penniless.

Thus came Otto Strasser's farewell to Hitler, after a good fight, lasting five years, for his Idea. Once again he had to start at the beginning, to resume his quest for

'German Socialism'. Hitler had made a bitter enemy. For the first time, a foremost leader of the Party had defied him and left him rather than compromise.

This was the moment when Gregor should have broken away too, with his brother. But Gregor never could bring himself to do that. He always thought that Hitler was sound at heart, only misguided. He believed that the horse 'was only bucking' and would return to the course, run a straight race. This self-deception cost him his life; the same self-deception, in other men, cost Europe a new war.

Now, Otto Strasser gathered his friends about him and began his war against Hitler. It is still going on. Indeed, it is only just approaching its decisive stage. Strasser, seeing that there was neither Revolutionary Socialism nor Socialism of any kind to be hoped for from Hitler and his Party, set out to corrode that party from within. The time would come, he was convinced, when Germany would insist on having Socialism, and then he and his men would take up the heritage that Hitler had maladministered.

So, with his eye on that future day, Otto Strasser formed his Black Front — a Brown Army within the Brown Army, a Party within the Party, a Gestapo within the Gestapo. All those men who were to rule Germany through terror now had to look over their own shoulders, to look suspiciously at their own shadows. It was a bold venture, and the Black Front from the beginning worked for a distant day — the day when Hitler should have come to power, betrayed his promised Socialism, brought Germany into war, and been overthrown.

CHAPTER 7

BLACK FRONT

Just ten years have passed, as I write this book in 1940, since the Black Front was founded, and during that time its name was little known, and still less understood, in the world outside Germany.

Within Germany it was well known, both before and after Hitler's triumph, but the tide was running so strongly in his favour that its struggle was one against overwhelming odds. Hitler's fame, and later his power, was growing, and the Black Front, though it carried on a stubborn fight, only attracted, outside Germany, the languid and slightly contemptuous interest with which the majority of people always regard fighters for a lost cause.

Few were then far-sighted enough to perceive that it might one day be the petard which would blow up Hitler. But it was formed of resolute men who would not compromise and clung to their beliefs, at whatever cost. Strasser himself, as I have shown, lost a small fortune through his stand against Hitler at the Kampfverlag; his leading associates also lost money, position, liberty and sometimes life.

But the fight never stopped, and neither exile, outlawry nor even the war itself could completely sever the bond that existed between them. The Black Front *exists* in Germany to-day, as no other organization exists,

ready to spring into action, like an engine at the touch of the starter, when the moment comes. Hitler's star is waning, and with it National Socialism in the form that he gave it. The Black Front, the members of which claim that they are the real National Socialists, is preparing for the come-back, and may have the last laugh yet.

It began, after the breach with Hitler, on July 4th, 1930, as the *Kampfgemeinschaft Revolutionärer Nationalsozialisten*, or Union of Revolutionary National Socialists. Later, after the adhesion of rebellious Nazi Storm Troops from the Berlin district and other sympathetic groups, it became simply The Black Front.

Its chief leaders were Otto Strasser himself, Major Buchrucker, Herbert Blank, and other well-known North German figures.

Major Buchrucker deserves description, for in him the discerning reader may find a pointer to the way the Black Front may in the future re-emerge, and possibly conquer. A regular officer and fiery patriot, he organized the Black Reichswehr, that secret army of 100,000 men which was formed, with the connivance of the regular German army, after the 1914-18 war, to outwit the military restrictions put on Germany by the Versailles Treaty. In lonely fortresses, in remote country districts, behind the hedges of big East Elbian estates owned by men who sympathized, this shadow army was raised out of sight of the French, British, Belgian and Italian officers sent to see that Germany respected the Treaty.

It was the first experiment in secret rearmament; the last, and greatest, was Göring's secret creation of an

facing: HERBERT BLANK AND OTTO STRASSER] enormous air force between the years 1933 and 1936. Here the word 'Black' appears for the first time; it had nothing to do with the colour of the uniforms worn by this clandestine force, which were not black, but meant *secret*. Exactly the same thing applies to the *Black* Front, and this is important to understand; it has nothing to do with the Strasser 'Black Guard' afterwards raised, which actually wore black shirts. Göring's air force, until it was revealed, was a *black* air force.

Major Buchrucker led one of the very earliest Putsches (those post-war attempts of the Nationalists to unseat the detested Republican Government by force of arms) in Germany — the Küstrin Putsch of 1922. It might be called the first Hitler Putsch. Its aim was to overthrow the Berlin Government and set up a new regime. General von Seeckt, the head of the regular Reichswehr, knew of it and was half in sympathy with it, but lost his nerve at the last moment.

Buchrucker was left alone and the Putsch collapsed. At his trial, he kept silence about the connivance of the regular Reichswehr in the formation of the secret Reichswehr and received ten years penal servitude, five of which he served. His sentence was not commuted, like that of the allegedly persecuted, but actually fortunate Hitler.

In 1928 he was set free and joined the Strasser Group of the National Socialist Party. At the breach with Hitler, he followed Strasser, and became commander of the uniformed 'Black Guard'. After Hitler's triumph he was thrown into a concentration camp and kept there for eighteen months. There he was drilled for weeks at a time. 'Quick march. Halt. About turn. Double. Halt. About turn. Double. Halt. About turn. Double. Halt. *Was, du Schwein, du willst ein Major gewesen sein?* What, you swine, you mean to say you were a Major? About turn. Double.' And so on, and so on.

Major Buchrucker was released when conscription was reintroduced in Germany — and is now a senior staff officer, with the rank of colonel!

I have chosen him to try and show the kind of man who helped Otto Strasser build his Black Front.

Strasser's breach with Hitler and formation of a new organization made a deep impression on the younger, more urgent and more idealistic National Socialists, and among the younger generation in general throughout the country. The Young German Order of Lieutenant Artur Mahraun (who was also put in a concentration camp after Hitler's triumph and terribly maltreated, so that he lost an eye, and now has a little bookshop in Berlin) entered into working collaboration with Strasser. So did the revolutionary peasants of Schleswig-Holstein, under their leader Klaus Hein. So did Richard Schlapke, who had a large following among the National Socialists of Silesia. So did a coterie of rising young men called the *Tatkreis*, whose foremost figures were Hans Zehrer and Ferdinand Fried, author of a most celebrated book called *The End of Capitalism.* (Fried is to-day the right-hand man of Hitler's Minister for Agriculture, Darré, whose Hereditary Peasant Holdings Act, drafted by Fried, and other bills represent the solitary attempt to put National Socialism into practice.)

These men and their movements represented what was best in Germany at that time. They all ardently desired the liberation of Germany, but also a new social order, and their common fear, which was afterwards vindicated, was that Hitler would betray them in this and, instead of making a *new* Germany, would simply bring another period of militarist reaction in the place of the chaotic, licentious, alien-inspired post-war Republic they lived in and detested.

From these men and these groups Strasser made his Black Front. But, here again, the significance of the word 'Black' must be remembered.

It meant 'secret', and precisely for that reason it is not possible to say just what men and groups were in it then, or are in it now. That will be shown when the moment comes. Otto Strasser was already working for a distant future. The visible organization — The Black Front, The Black Guard, the three weekly papers in Berlin, Breslau and Munich — comprised but a quarter of the whole. This was the outward and visible structure. The other three-quarters remained invisible; at the instruction of Otto Strasser, they remained in the parties or organizations to which they belonged, in accordance with the first clause of the Black Front programme, which stated 'The Black Front is a school for the officers and non-commissioned-officers of the German Revolution'.

Strasser deliberately chose this penetration-from-within, enemy-inside-the-walls system. Through it, he had his men in all the parties of those days, save the Communist Party; namely, in the National Socialist, Socialist, Nationalist, Democratic, and other parties.

At this very day, months after the outbreak of war, his Black Front men are in all existent organizations in Germany, but especially in the Army, the Brown Army, the National Socialist Party, the Labour Front and the SS.

This is only possible because of the 'black' method he adopted three years *before* Hitler came to power. Through it, the members of the Black Front were always anonymous, apart from the visible structure. For the same reason he never put up candidates at the elections, and thus there was never an open trial of strength or demonstration of the size of the Black Front and its appeal.

Otto Strasser and his men never felt that they were counter-revolutionaries. They held themselves to be the real revolutionaries. Their whole fear was that Hitler would not make a revolution, and they were right. He only destroyed, or half-destroyed, leaving it to his successors to build. Their spiritual community of views with him was that they were against the old; but they wanted something new, which he has never achieved and which, as seems clear from the conversations with Otto Strasser in 1930 which I have quoted and from Hitler's actions since he came to power, he never intended.

Perhaps I can best show the conflict of hopes and fears which tormented the mind of idealist young Germans in those days by describing a strange episode in which both Hitler and Otto Strasser figured.

Soon after he formed his Black Front came the trial, before the Supreme Court of the German Reich at Leipzig in the autumn of 1930, of three young Reichswehr officers who were accused of subversive activities in the interest of the National Socialist Party. This trial will long have been forgotten by the majority of people, but a bell will probably tinkle in their memories when I say that Hitler gave evidence at it and used the phrase 'Heads will roll' — when he should come to power.

These three young officers — Lieutenant Wendt, Second Lieutenants Scheringer and Ludin — were typical of the best kind of German of that period, the sort of man represented, in a rather older generation, by Otto Strasser. They wanted, ardently, fervently, and above all things that Germany should become free and mighty again, and if need be, by force of arms. But that was not all they wanted. They shared the longing of eight-tenths of the German people for a new and better and juster social order, for something which they were ready to call 'Socialism' if it were different from the Socialism of the Socialist Party and from the Socialism of Moscow, both of which they intuitively felt to be alien and false and consequently loathed.

These officers had hoped to find what they wanted in Hitler's National Socialism, they had done what they could to enlist the sympathies of their comrades and their men for that party, and they now stood on trial for this offence and Hitler gave evidence on their behalf. The whole issue on which a conviction or an acquittal turned was, whether Hitler's party was a revolutionary one or one which sought to achieve power by constitutional means, and he, in maintaining stubbornly that it would use only constitutional methods, may have wished to do what he could to get the young officers acquitted.

If that was his aim — I doubt it, myself; he was simply using 'tactics' again — the three lieutenants did not thank him for it. They had believed in him as a revolutionary National Socialist. His bourgeois methods and tactics in the witness-box antagonized them.

Even 'Heads will roll' he interpreted, on a question from the Public Prosecutor, not as meaning that he would work for a violent and revolutionary overthrow of the existing regime and thus seize power; but that he would take revenge, by 'constitutional means', after achieving power, by 'constitutional means'. (This is exactly what happened, incidentally; the Reichstag fire furnished the 'constitutional means' and the brutalities done to political opponents after the seizure of power, as well as the shooting of several hundred defenceless persons on June 30th, 1934, were nothing but the gangster's revenge in the coldest of blood, without any trace of white-hot revolutionary fervour or resentment-born-of-the-barricades.)

Thus the three lieutenants went to their fortress partly-disillusioned men, and in the loneliness of their imprisonment began deeply to study political questions. All three came from Ulm, in South Germany, and knew little about the North German vendetta. Ludin was sent to Rastadt in Baden; Scheringer and Wendt to Gollnow, where they had the cell once occupied by Major Buchrucker.

Searching their minds and consciences for the political truth, Scheringer and Wendt wrote to Otto Strasser, who did not know them, and asked him to visit them and explain the whole political conflict to them. He visited them three times.

But just about that time the German Communist Party sought to make use of the strong patriotic wind which was blowing by taking patriotism into their own programme and issuing a manifesto which called, not only for the social, but also for the 'national' liberation of the German people. The young officers thus began to wonder if the truth they sought were possibly to be found in the Communist Party, which also strenuously wooed them in their captivity, and during two of Otto Strasser's visits to them representatives of the executive committee of the German Communist Party were also present. The two lieutenants asked Otto Strasser if he would object to a full debate, and he agreed.

An extraordinary scene this, the struggle for the soul of two German subalterns in the dining-room of a prison. I hope it may give readers some idea of the tormenting conflict which racked the minds of such young Germans, of their dogged search for hope, for an ideal, for a better Germany. This state of mind remains; it was only chloroformed by Hitler; and soon it will awake again, more turbulent and clamant than ever.

Picture the scene. On one side of the table, half a dozen of the leading Communist prisoners and their spokesman, the emissary from Berlin. On the other, Otto Strasser. Between them, the two lieutenants. In the background, prison warders, listening enthralled.

On the first occasion the Communists sent down a Jew, Leow, a burly fellow who was commander of the uniformed Communist Storm Troop formations called The Red Fighting Front; after Hitler's triumph, he fled to Moscow and in due course was relieved of further anxieties in this world by Stalin. He was a poor debater and no match for Strasser.

So the next time the Communists sent down the very best man they could find, and an astute move this was, for he was a most remarkable figure. Captain Beppo Römer was the Communists' best show-piece. He had been a distinguished German officer in the war; after the war he had been a leader of one of the anti-Red Free Corps (the Oberland Corps), and in that capacity had collaborated with Hitler in the Munich Putsch of 1923; and now, in the course of that unending search for an ideal, he had gone over to the Communists. (Credible reports say that he too is now in the Reichswehr again to-day, a thing only explicable by the saying, *on revient toujours à ses premiers amours.*)

Captain Beppo Römer was no mean antagonist, and a terrific battle was joined across the deal table in the prison dining-room, with the lieutenants and warders hanging on every word. Otto Strasser violently attacked Hitler, but he attacked the Communists even more violently. The debate continued for hours, quarter neither asked nor given.

At the end of it, Lieutenant Wendt became Otto Strasser's man, and the Black Front had its representative in Gollnow Fortress. When he was released, he openly joined the Black Front and became a member of the executive. After Hitler's triumph he was arrested and no man has ever learned if he is living or dead.

Remember that these three young men, who risked their careers for Hitler, played an important part in bringing him to power; at their trial, the full light of world publicity for the first time shone on him; the party used them prodigally to make the world believe that Hitler had the army with him; but no more mercy was shown to Wendt than to a mongrel dog. Hitler's mission has always been to destroy good Germans — not Jews. Wendt heard the Viennese cheapjack ranting in the witness-box about 'Heads will roll', and didn't like it, because Hitler's conception was not of a clean fight at the barricades, but of cold-blooded vengeance after the achievement of power. But even Wendt cannot have dreamed, that day, that his own head would be among those that rolled.

Scheringer was won over by the Communists at first, by an interesting method. Captain Römer told him that he need not join the Communist Party, but could form his own 'Scheringer Group', a patriotic-Bolshevist group, in loose affiliation with it, and the Communists would finance a newspaper for him. They wished to use his name in the struggle against Hitler and Otto Strasser alike.

Scheringer agreed to this, after telling Otto Strasser privately that he was in sympathy with the Black Front but would like to wean away the most useful men from the Communists for it. Strasser told him he would fail in this, because when the Jewish leaders of the party perceived his little game they would stop publication of the newspaper they were to finance for him. This actually happened, and in 1932 Scheringer broke with the Communists and joined the Black Front. After Hitler's triumph he too disappeared from the scene, and none knows his whereabouts to-day.

The third lieutenant, Ludin, may be heard more of one day. He alone remained a Nazi, and narrowly escaped death on June 30th, 1934, but to-day he stands very high in the Party and is Storm Troop commander for the whole of South-Western Germany, Württemberg, Baden, Hesse, the Palatinate, and the Saar.

Then Otto Strasser campaigned all over Germany, north, south, east and west, speaking, organizing, and writing. He was several times hurt when Storm Troopers attacked his meetings; Major Buchrucker was knifed at Flensburg.

Strasser then introduced the platform-debate type of meeting, challenging Hitler and Goebbels by public placard to confront him at any time or place they chose, but this was ignored. He had many stormy platform-battles with the representatives of many parties: with Willi Münzenberg, the Communist leader, in a working-class district of Berlin; with Kaspar, a later Red Fighting Front leader; with Colonel Duesterberg, of the Nationalist Stahlhelm; and many others. But the Nazis refused all challenges and would never appear on a platform in open debate with the Black Front. They did, however, do their best by violence to crush the Black Front — and they marked down, for future vengeance, all the men who thus defied them.

Otto Strasser is almost the only one of all those men, his chief known helpers, who escaped death, the concentration camp, or prison.

For instance, his Black Front Leader for Schleswig-Holstein was a man who had formerly been one of the most popular National Socialist leaders, Dr. Grantz. Grantz is a small and indomitable man, with the student's slashes all over his face — 'One of the best

Germans I ever knew,' says Strasser. His fame in the National Socialist Party was chiefly that he had been the hero of a terrific free-fight between Nazis and Communists at Woehrden, when four Storm Troopers were killed and thirty injured.

At the burial of these men, Hitler stayed in Grantz's house and assured him in his most emotional manner ('Mussolini, I shall never forget what you have done for me to-day') that he would never forget etc. etc. and would repay and reward Dr. Grantz in the Third Reich. In March 1933, immediately after the Reichstag fire, Dr. Grantz was thrown into a concentration camp and is there now, in 1940; he has never had charges preferred against him or been tried. Seven years in a concentration camp!

But Grantz's spirit is unbroken. In 1937 a fellow-prisoner from the concentration camp, Sachsenhausen, visited Otto Strasser in Prague and told him of Grantz's martyrdom. He also described this incident: The commandant told Grantz one day that he would remain in the camp as long as he lived. Grantz answered, 'Jawohl, I shall remain here — but as commandant with you as prisoner'. He received fourteen days 'hunger-arrest'.

The tale of Otto Strasser's men is a terrible one, even for these times, when brutality and suffering have become the norm. Dr. Becker, a lawyer who was his Black Front Leader for the populous Halle district, has also been in a concentration camp since 1933, without charge or trial. Dr. Becker, who is also in Sachsenhausen, has, in contrast to Dr. Grantz, become a better-treated prisoner, for the following strange reason. The Prussian SS guard at the camp was relieved one day by Bavarian SS men, who insisted on having their native Bavarian beer — I said earlier that beer is a religion in Bavaria — whereas their predecessors had made a contract for the beer supply with a Prussian brewery. An action followed, in which Dr. Becker was put up as advocate for the Bavarian SS men, and won the case. Since then, his lot has improved.

To-day, between six and seven hundred Black Front men are in the concentration camps and prisons. Many of them have been there for seven years. During these years, thousands of others were arrested and released after serving shorter terms. And all these were but the *known* Black Front men.

I have looked forward a little here, to show the things that happened to the men who openly supported Otto Strasser in his fight against Hitler in the years between the split and the Nazi triumph, 1930-1933. They bore the brunt of the battle, and this glimpse of the future shows how they paid for their convictions.

But most of them still live, and hold their convictions still. Before so very long, they will be free men again. And many others who think like them have always been free and even wear the brown shirt.

The conflict itself seriously shook the Hitler Party, which, indeed, came to the verge of an ignominious collapse. It was only rescued, and enthroned in power, in the nick of time, by those very forces which Otto Strasser and his men regarded as the worst enemies of the new order for which *they* fought — big business and big landlordry.

The conflict reached its height in 1931 and 1932. In 1931 came the second open revolt in the National Socialist Party. Captain Stennes, the Brown Army commander for the whole of North Germany, also could not stand Goebbels any longer and broke away, taking many of his brownshirts with him. He went the way of Otto Strasser, and joined Otto Strasser and the Black Front.

I shall have to look into the future again to tell the story of Captain Stennes to-day. It is another extraordinary tale; these Germans are almost incredible.

He, too, was an officer with a distinguished war record and subsequently a Free Corps commander. After Hitler's triumph, he, too, was arrested, maltreated, sent to a concentration camp and told that he was to be shot and must dig his own grave. Standing before this empty grave, he was executed four times — with blank cartridges! Later he was released at the mediation of a well-known German general, his former commanding officer, General Watter, on signing a pledge to leave Germany within twenty-four hours. After a visit to Otto Strasser, in exile, he went to China and is to-day commander of the bodyguard of Chiang Kai-shek! I have used more exclamation marks in this book than ever before, but the things I have to tell seem to deserve them.

In 1932 the Black Front was gaining ground and strength. The Hitler Party was going downhill, and fairly fast. But for the great age of Hindenburg, which made him the senile dupe of intriguers and the credulous victim of old wives' tales, it probably never would have come to power.

At the beginning of 1932 one of the first Hitlerist Ministers ever made, Dr. Franzen in Brunswick, gave up his post in protest against the reactionary tendencies of the party, as shown in the Harzburg agreement with Alfred Hugenberg, of big business and big armaments, and Hjalmar Schacht, of big banking.

In August came Hitler's rebuff by Hindenburg, who at that time seems still to have been of clear mind; he gave Hitler a parade-ground dressing-down, and vowed that he would never make him Chancellor. Goebbels, keenly watching to see which way the cat would jump, wrote in his diary of 'deep despondency' in the party; the financial position he said, was 'hopeless, nothing but debts', and so on. In November came elections and another blow for the Hitler Party, which lost over 2,000,000 votes. 'A defeat', wrote Goebbels; and Hitler threatened to commit suicide.

Otto Strasser was fighting the Hitler Party with all his might, doing his best to precipitate its downfall.

Gregor Strasser was in the party, Hitler's chief lieutenant. From the dark forest into which the German Republic had wandered, only two exits offered, as he saw. It could take the path of a Socialist revolution, which would lead to something new; or that of a return to Prussian militarism, which meant war. Some combination of forces had to be found which would give a majority in the motley Parliament, and at this point the old, old dilemma appeared: should National

Socialism prove its Socialism and join hands with the Socialists, or should it betray its Socialism and join with the Nationalists?

The choice was clear. The first way would lead to a better Germany and to peace; the second to the disappointment of hopes of a better social order and to war.

Gregor Strasser — how Goebbels vilifies his former master at this point in his diary — was for the first way and urged that the National Socialists should follow it. It meant an alliance with the Socialist workers — not with the Communists, and not with the Socialist Party, but with the socialist-minded workers organized in the trade unions. Their representative was Leipart, the trade union leader. General Schleicher, the Chancellor of the day, had avowed himself to be 'a social general' and that meant that the army would play. This meant a Government headed by Gregor Strasser (Hindenburg had said he would never have Hitler), or General Schleicher, and with Leipart, and this was the combination which would have saved Germany.

This coalition is not dead, but only seems dead; its ghost is now appearing to haunt Hitler.

Göring was Gregor Strasser's great antagonist at this moment. He was for the second way out — the alliance with heavy industry and the big landowners which would entail the immediate jettisoning of all Socialist and social ideals, and would inevitably concentrate all Germany's thought on rearmament and militarism and lead to a new Prussian war.

These were the two courses between which a choice had to be made, while Germany's destiny hung in the balance. The vital difference between them was the old one of principles and ideals. The first way meant working for a definite aim. The second meant working to get power, without regard for what came after. This was the gap between the two camps, between Gregor Strasser and Hermann Göring. Hitler's attitude was 'Never mind about what comes afterwards; let us get the power, the rest will take care of itself.'

He allowed both Gregor Strasser and Göring to negotiate, Strasser with Schleicher and Leipart, Göring with Hugenberg and Papen. He approved of both parallel sets of negotiations. Gregor Strasser's chances of success were great. The general, Schleicher, and the trade union leader, Leipart, were in agreement with him; a great part of the Hitler Party was for him; and he was acceptable to Hindenburg, for he was an officer and normal, while Hitler was a corporal and a clown, and Röhm was homosexual, and all this counted with an Old Gentleman who had once disparaged Goethe as a man of immoral habits to Max Liebermann, the painter, and on being reminded, 'But, after all, he wrote *Faust*,' replied, 'Yes, that is his only excuse'.

Gregor Strasser was twice received by Hindenburg in these fateful days. Germany, and the peace of Europe, was almost saved.

The real bitterness of Gregor Strasser's tragedy can only be understood if it be borne in mind that he heard from Hindenburg's own lips, at one of these meetings, that the Old Gentleman 'would never make the Bohemian Corporal Chancellor' (this was the contemptuous term that Hindenburg used for the crossbred, vague-origined Hitler). Thus his very loyalty to Hitler demanded that Gregor Strasser should strive with all his strength to achieve office himself and bring about a coalition in which the National Socialists would be predominant. It would never have occurred to him that the Old Gentleman would, barely two months later, do the very thing he had sworn never to do. This is the eternal weakness of an honest man, such as was Gregor Strasser. Having no untruth in himself, he accepts the word of others, and when they break it, he is undone. Hindenburg, by this means, made it possible for Gregor Strasser's enemies in the National Socialist Party to defame him, to Hitler, as a traitor.

The story of those eight weeks in which the fate of Germany was decided, and Europe doomed again to war, by a few men in Berlin deserves to be told in more detail. The massacre of Poles and Czechs, the blackout of England, the manning of the Maginot Line, the battle off Montevideo, the conscription of British youth — all these things, all these woes of to-day, are the children of those fateful weeks in Berlin at the turn of the year 1932.

Gregor Strasser, in November 1932, went into the fray with these thoughts in his mind: The Party was going downhill, heading for disaster. The Old Gentleman had told him he would never make Hitler Chancellor. He himself was entirely loyal to Hitler — for that reason he had not followed his brother Otto at the breakaway. The country had had a taste of government by a little group of reactionaries — Papen and his Cabinet of Barons — and had repeatedly shown, by overwhelmingly hostile votes, that it loathed this and was approaching the point at which it would violently erupt against them. How could the National Socialist Party and Germany be saved? Not, thought Gregor Strasser, by alliance with this self-same group. The only alternative was a coalition between the National Socialist Party and the masses of the trade-unionist workers, who must be weaned away from their discredited Socialist leaders, with the benevolent backing of the Reichswehr. Leipart and General Schleicher were willing to collaborate with him — but not with Hitler — in such a coalition. The way to save both country and party seemed clear.

Gregor Strasser, as the organizer of the party, knew better than any other man the disastrous plight in which it was (a plight revealed *after* Hitler's triumph in the diary of Goebbels). He knew that it was breaking under a load of debt, that it could not face another election — and Germany was having an election about every three months at that time — because nobody would even print electoral placards for it. The time had come, he thought, to save what could be saved.

At the end of November, just eight weeks before Hitler's triumph, General Schleicher brought him to President von Hindenburg, who gave his word of honour as a Prussian general that he would never make the 'Bohemian Corporal' Chancellor. Gregor Strasser immediately reported to Hitler, telling him that the Chancellorship was beyond his reach, but might possibly be obtainable for himself, Gregor Strasser. The Vice-Chancellorship, in a cabinet headed by General Schleicher, could certainly be had.

As Gregor Strasser told him of Hindenburg's pledge never to make the Bohemian Corporal Chancellor, Hitler interjected that he had different information from another source. Strasser, puzzled, informed General Schleicher of this, who expressed great annoyance — and set his private police to watch his predecessor in the Chancellorship, the man he had made and unmade, the Puckish Mephistopheles of our unhappy Europe, von Papen. (The police agents afterwards took a photograph of Papen leaving the house, in Cologne, of the banker Schroeder, where he had just had a talk with Hitler that was arranged by the present German Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop. This was the meeting at which Papen agreed to recommend Hitler to Hindenburg for the Chancellorship, on the understanding that he would remain the prisoner in his cabinet of a majority of non-Nazi Elder Statesmen none of whom he would dismiss. Schleicher bitterly reproached Papen that he had been intriguing with Hitler. Papen gave his word of honour as a Prussian officer that he had not spoken with Hitler. Schleicher produced the photograph. General Schleicher than proposed the expulsion of Papen from the Count Schlieffen Society (the members of this body were restricted to the Officers' Corps) on the ground that he had given a perjured word. The disciplinary investigation has never been concluded: the instigator of it was shot on June 30th, 1934, as was Gregor Strasser.)

But while Schleicher was trying to defeat the intrigues of Papen, Hitler appeared to be convinced by Strasser's report and to be half-ready to accept the solution he proposed. He made certain conditions — that the party's debts should be paid, that the Reichstag should not be dissolved without his sanction, that three other National Socialist leaders (Frick, Stöhr and Hierl) should enter the cabinet with Gregor Strasser — and on this basis was prepared to agree to the Strasser-Schleicher-Leipart coalition, to the coalition of National Socialists, Reichswehr, and Socialist workers. All was ready for the written agreement between Hitler, Strasser and the ruling Chancellor, Schleicher. On December 7th, 1932, Gregor Strasser, in Berlin, spoke by telephone with Hitler in Munich, and Hitler agreed to come to Berlin the next day to conclude the negotiations.

On the morning of December 8th Gregor Strasser stood on the platform of the Anhalter Station and waited for Hitler. The night express from Munich arrived. Hitler's compartment was empty. The conductor explained why. 'Herr Hitler', he said, 'got out at Weimar.'

The reason why he got out was also the reason why the coalition was never made, why Germany embarked on a new period of militarism and war, and why Gregor Strasser was later killed. This reason, or rather these reasons — for their names were Göring and Goebbels — only became clear subsequently, but can be explained now, in Otto Strasser's words.

At Weimar, Captain Hermann Göring and Gauleiter Dr. Goebbels had intercepted Hitler's train. They saw that the formation of the coalition would mean the end of their own ambitions. In a mass coalition reaching from Leipart's trade unionists on the left by way of the Reichswehr to Gregor Strasser's National Socialists on the right, there would be no place either for a Propaganda Minister or for a terrorist.

They travelled by car to Weimar, awakened Hitler, and fetched him from his sleeping-car. The whole thing, they told him, was a plot, a plot made by Gregor Strasser and Schleicher. It was not true that Hindenburg had pledged himself not to make Hitler Chancellor. Strasser's aim was simply to become Chancellor himself, to keep Hitler on a nose-lead, and if necessary to smash the party.

Thus enlightened, Hitler came later to Berlin, hurled the accusations of Göring and Goebbels in Strasser's face and called him a traitor. Strasser asked if Hitler really thought him capable of such infamy. Hitler answered, yes. Without a word Gregor Strasser went away, wrote out his resignation from all his offices in the party, and his wish to continue as 'a private soldier' in the National Socialist Party, and went off with his family to Bavaria. He was broken-spirited from this moment, and never appeared in politics again.

Meanwhile Papen, intent on the overthrow of his detested rival Schleicher, went lobbying in Berlin with his rival proposal for a cabinet in which he should be Chancellor, Hitler Vice-Chancellor, Göring his own (Papen's) deputy as Prussian Premier, big-business Hugenberg Minister for Economics. Another word-of-honour (they were cheap) was given about this time — Hitler's word of honour that he would change nothing in the composition of such a cabinet for four years. Hitler on January 30th, the night of his triumph, reaffirmed this particular word of honour from the balcony of the Reich Chancery in the Wilhelmstrasse.

Gregor Strasser's disappearance put an end to General Schleicher's hopes of retaining power and saving Germany, though he did not realize this himself. He continued to try and build that coalition, though its main prop was gone. He placed too much faith in the fighting spirit, and anti-Nazi fervour, of Leipart's five million organized trade unionists. He announced himself to the nation by radio as 'a social General' on December 15th, 1932, and thus strengthened Papen's hand in the negotiations with the big-business group in the west of Germany and with the big-landlord group in the east.

Nevertheless, Hitler on that day — six weeks before his triumph — seemed to have not the remotest chance of attaining power. Goebbels on that very day wrote in his diary: 'It is high time for us to gain power; for the present, however, not the slightest prospect of that offers'. Hitler talked of committing suicide, as he had once before actually sworn to do — on November 9th, 1923, the day of his abortive Putsch in Munich.

Just at this juncture came the meeting at Cologne between Papen and Hitler. The banker Schroeder filled up the bankrupt Nazi treasury, and Goebbels's diary began again to take a more optimistic note. Now came Schleicher's fatal mistake, that helped to cost him his life.

Schleicher could probably have saved Germany and Europe at that juncture by a bold stroke. The stroke he made was not bold enough. He attacked the most powerful and vindictive groups in Germany without covering his rear.

What he did was to release, for the use of the press, material collected by a parliamentary committee of investigation into the misuse of the famous *Osthilfe*, or Eastern Help Fund. To make this matter clear to British readers, it is worth while remarking that 'Help for the Farmers' in Britain usually means financial subsidies at the cost of the taxpayer for great landowners who rent land to farmers. So in Germany, immense sums which had been budgeted as 'relief for suffering agriculture in Eastern Germany' (the *Osthilfe*) had actually gone in large part to great landowners who were already hopelessly indebted to the State and whose estates were badly run.

These facts had come out in the parliamentary inquiry but had been suppressed until General Schleicher revealed them. The investigators stated among other things that some of the great but bankrupt landowners had 'whored, drunk and gambled' away the money they received from the State. (Chancellor Brüning's downfall had been directly caused by his attempt to foreclose on these insolvent landlords and use the land for smallholdings. The Hindenburgs, father and son, themselves belonged to these squires, having been presented with a large property by them, and President Hindenburg had dismissed Brüning on a charge of introducing 'Bolshevism' in Germany, on this very account.)

Now Schleicher returned to this self-same, dynamite-laden issue. He thought so to discomfit the embattled forces of reaction by publishing this material in the press that their intrigues against him would be broken, their further opposition to his coalition-making plans neutralized. He under-estimated them. He aroused in them a mortal enmity that brought Hitler to power within a fortnight. One of the squires alone, their leading spokesman, the aged Oldenburg-Januschau, had had rather more than £30,000 from the fund for the alleviation of his distress, and such an attack on his hereditary prerogatives and perquisites was bound to make him apoplectically angry.

This card that Schleicher held *was* a strong card, if played properly. It was even the ace of trumps, properly played. But if he meant to play it, he should first, and before revealing his intention, have obtained from President Hindenburg power to dissolve the Reichstag, and then he should have arrested the chief intriguers, Papen, Hitler, Oskar von Hindenburg, the leading Junkers, Göring, and a few others, and have rallied the masses of Gregor Strasser's National Socialists and of Leipart's trade unionists behind him by a manifesto explaining the reasons for his action.

By such means, he might have saved Germany and Europe — for these insatiable squires were also the hereditary war-makers of Europe. Instead of giving orders to Leipart, he consulted and debated with Leipart — and the German Socialists, like all other Germans except the little militarist clique, can do nothing without a word of command. Leipart's reaction to such plans was: 'What on earth will Herr Bumke say?' The good Herr Bumke was at that time President of the Constitutional Court of the Weimar Republic, a tribunal before which all nice questions of constitutional procedure had to be brought and decided. The awful vision of an enraged and avenging Bumke was enough to destroy the last hope of a right and reasonable policy in Germany.

So the end came. At the last moment one last intrigue succeeded in obtaining for Hitler, not the Vice-Chancellorship, but the Chancellorship itself. This was the story, brought to Hindenburg by an agent of von Papen (Werner von Alvensleben) and supported by Göring; that General Schleicher intended to march on Berlin with the troops of the Potsdam garrison. After all the other bogies that had been paraded before him — especially that bogy of 'Bolshevism on the land' — this one was enough to stampede the old gentleman who had been presented with an estate and who, eight weeks earlier, had pledged himself never to make the Bohemian Corporal Chancellor. He signed the birth-certificate of Hitler's Government, and all was over.

President and Field-Marshal von Hindenburg signed, on the dotted line, the order for the new war, the death warrant for thousands, possibly yet millions, of Germans, Spaniards, Czechs, Poles, and, short of a miracle, Britons and Frenchmen.

I have explained these events in some detail because they explain much in the life of the two Strassers, in the death of Gregor, and in the implacable campaign against Hitler of his brother Otto.

While Gregor Strasser's last struggle with Hitler for the soul of the National Socialist Party and of Germany was in progress, Otto Strasser, Hitler's inveterate enemy, stood aside, watched, and did all in his power to thwart Hitler. A day or two before Hitler's triumph, he sat in a restaurant Unter den Linden at supper with that Madame Geneviève Tabouis who to-day writes about the political mysteries of Europe in the French and British Press. Madame Tabouis came from General Schleicher. That over-astute, and ill-fated Chancellor, a few hours before his overthrow, had held his clenched fist out for her to see, and said, 'I've got Hitler like that'. Madame Tabouis told Otto Strasser of this remark, and he answered, 'Well, if Herr Schleicher really has got Hitler like that, he had better be quick and crush him, or it will be too late'.

Hitler became Chancellor. Otto Strasser has not the same unrelenting personal hatred of Hitler that he has of Göring, Goebbels, and Heydrich. He does not feel the same bitter loathing of the man to whose destruction he has consecrated his life. This surprised me at first, but I think I understand it now. Strasser regards Hitler as a curiosity, a freak. He cannot take him quite seriously, in spite of everything, and cannot help laughing a little when he looks at him. Hitler is something outside Strasser's ken.

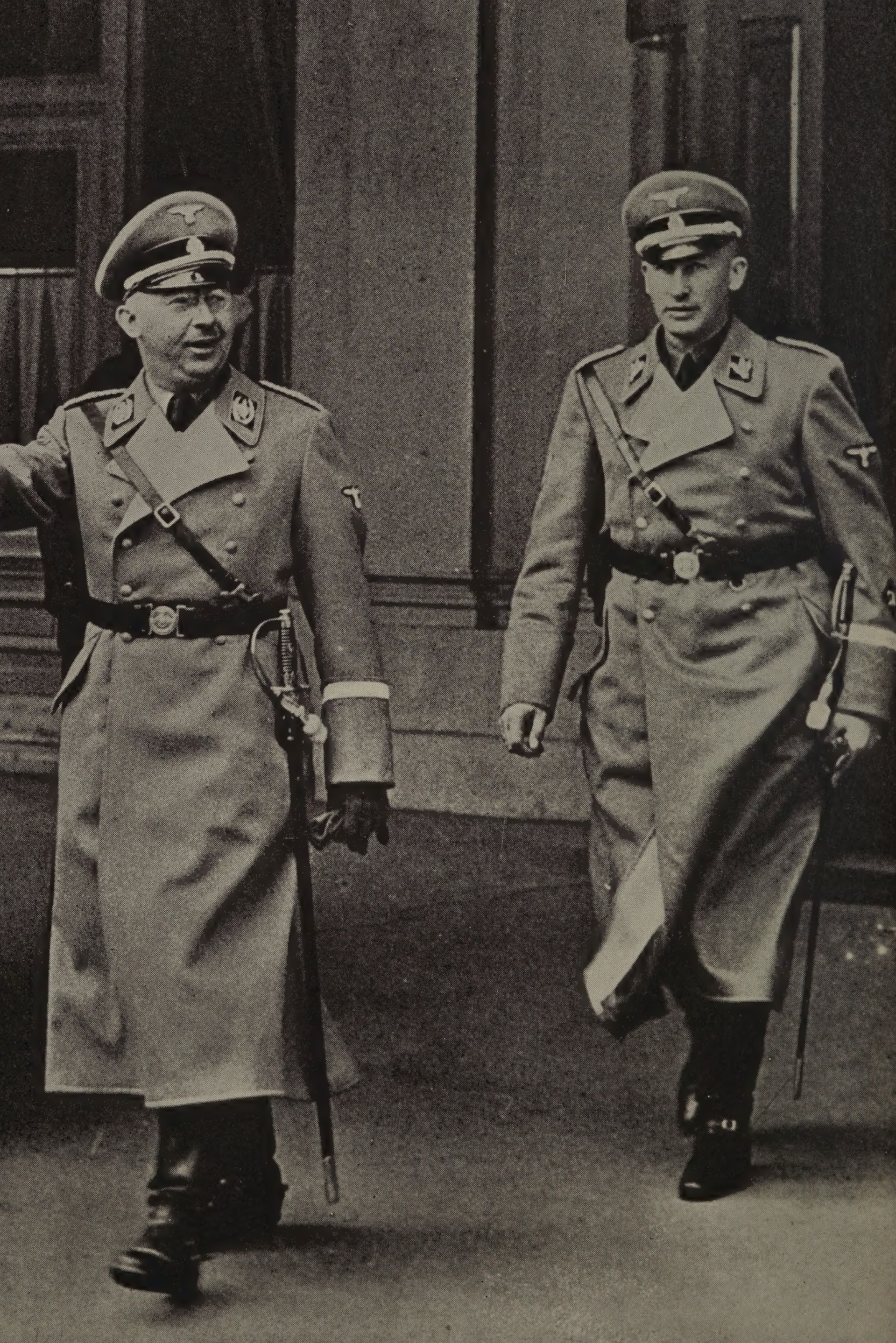
'A feminine type, with a destructive mission, not a constructive one,' he says. 'Hitler gave the best description of himself — a drummer, or showman, and a sleep-walker. Nothing is real or genuine about him. Not even the title Führer grew on him; it is not the product of any inner impulse or wish of the German people or even of Hitler himself. It is the result — and this is so typical of Germany — of an order couched in military language and signed by an officer, Röhm, who in the later part of 1931 issued this command to the Party: As from the Nth, the supreme commander of the SA, and Leader of the Party, Adolf Hitler, is only to be addressed or referred to as The Führer.'

Otto Strasser smiled when he told me this and added: 'And believe me, Mr. Reed, I know the Germans, and you must believe me when I say that our revolution, too, will have to be *ordered*, otherwise the generals and others — I know these people — will ask: "But who will undertake the responsibility?" '

Now, in January 1933, this man Hitler became ruler of Germany, and everything he has done since then has justified the doubts that Otto Strasser felt about him for so many years, Strasser's parting from, and Strasser's war against him.

With that day, the black years began for the two brothers. Gregor was at first allowed to feel secure in his chemical works in Berlin. He had left the Party and took no part in politics. But Hitler still saw in him a dangerous rival, particularly in the stormy first half of 1934, when dissatisfaction with the achievements, or lack of achievements, of the Hitler Party was rife, and the ghost of that old coalition of Strasser National-Socialists, Reichswehr Generals, and Socialist workers, popped its head up again. For that reason, General Schleicher, and his wife, were shot in their quiet flat in a pleasant suburb. For that reason, Gregor Strasser was dragged away from his midday meal with his family and taken to the Secret Police headquarters.

Otto Strasser has never succeeded in obtaining any



account of his brother's death which he could completely verify. The version he believes to be true was given to him by another man who was at the Secret Police headquarters at the same time. He says that Gregor Strasser, late in the afternoon, was lying on a bench in his cell when the fair-haired Heydrich, Himmler's chief assistant, and another man, who is not known, thrust aside the grating in the door and fired through it with revolvers, missing Strasser, who jumped up and ran into a corner out of sight of the grating. The two men then opened the door and fired round it, again missing Strasser, who ran to a third corner. They fired again and hit him, so that he sank down, still alive but badly hurt. Then Heydrich entered the cell and dispatched him with a bullet in the neck.

But that, again, is a glimpse into the future, for the sake of keeping the threads of this narrative intact, which is about Otto Strasser, his life, his motives, and particularly the score which he has to settle.

During the three and a half years that elapsed between his breach with Hitler and Hitler's triumph, which began his own exile, Otto Strasser, as I have shown, had been busy with the construction of his Black Front. Its open activities I have described — the campaigning up and down the country, the anti-Hitlerist newspapers, the platform-debates. The Black Front had its own Storm Troop organization, the Black Guard, not to be confused with Hitler's SS, which is sometimes also called the Black Guard because of its black uniform. Strasser's Black Guard actually wore a black shirt, but the adjective Black, as I repeat, did not refer to this, but to the secret

facing: **HIMMLER AND HEYDRICH]**

nature of the greater Black Front organization. The badge of the Black Front, incidentally, is a sword-and-hammer, crossed.

But these visible activities of the Black Front were the less important back of its work. The vital work was that indicated by the word Black — secret organization. In all political parties in Germany save the Communists, but particularly in the National Socialist Party and its organizations, Otto Strasser had his followers, who had been carefully instructed not to reveal their allegiance. Their part in his organization, planned against a long-distant future day, was to remain where they were, ostensibly good Nazis, enthusiastic Storm Troopers, ardent SS men, and the like, and to devote the knowledge they acquired by this method to promoting the ends of the Black Front.

They are still doing this, and much of their work, many of their exploits, can therefore only be told at a later day. But by this 'black' method, Otto Strasser was able, during the years when he worked against Hitler inside Germany and also during those years when he carried on the war from across the frontiers, to see through doors and walls, to know of orders and conversations that were never meant to be known outside very small Nazi circles.

Thus, when he made his escape from Germany, he had as his chauffeur, for long distances, a senior Storm Troop commander in the brown uniform. I have seen a letter written to him, in exile, by one of the leading SS commanders of to-day, a man famous and popular in Germany, and this letter breathes a fierce hatred of

Hitler. I have seen other letters from officers now serving in the Reichswehr.

Through these invisible channels of information, Otto Strasser was able to look into Secret Police headquarters in Berlin itself, to read the report made by a man sent to kill him. He was able to identify other agents of the Gestapo who from time to time approached him, under one pretext or another, on a similar mission. He knows the contents of his own dossier at Gestapo headquarters.

These invisible supporters *inside* Germany have, by one means or another, supplied him with the money to carry on his campaign in exile; he spent all the money he himself possessed on it, and is, on account of one or other part of his political philosophy, cut off from the normal sources of financial support upon which Hitler's enemies in exile draw. Those friends in Germany, too, have supplied him with false passports, sheltered his emissaries. The men he has sent into Germany, to carry out some exploit against Hitler's regime, have done this at the risk of their lives and without payment.

In the course of this book, the reader will become acquainted with the men who *openly* helped him — some of them have appeared already — and may judge for himself their characters, qualities, courage and patriotism. But the legion of his unknown followers, the men inside Germany who are ready when the time comes to step out of the Brown Shirt or other ranks and avow their allegiance, is more important.

January 30th, 1933, closed a chapter in Otto Strasser's story and opened a new one. Another starting-gun sounded.

The bitterest years of his life were beginning. The man he distrusted and despised had triumphed, was Chancellor of the Reich. His brother was at last disillusioned and was soon to die. What was to become of him, Otto Strasser, of his Black Front, of his hopes, of the German Socialism for which he had laboured so hard.

What did the future now hold?

CHAPTER 8

CRAZY ODYSSEY

With Hitler's arrival in the Reich Chancery in Berlin on January 30th, 1933, and the endless torchlight procession of Storm Troopers between delirious multitudes and past the two lighted windows, at one of which old Hindenburg nodded mandarin-like approval while at the other Hitler leaned far out in the spotlight, saluting, with these events another period in the life of our Revolutionary Socialist began — the period of pursuit and escape, plot and counterplot, mantrap and elusion, flight and exile, of a one-man-war waged by an outlaw from across the frontiers against the most powerful man in Europe.

Nothing in Hitler's life is so dramatic as this part of Strasser's life. It is an astounding story of adventure and hairbreadth escape; it is just Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Wallace, Phillips Oppenheim and all the others come true. It suggests that destiny must have something waiting, at the end of this road, for the man who has travelled it; why, otherwise, has destiny always intervened?

On February 4th, 1933, four days after Hitler's triumph Otto Strasser's Black Front newspapers were suppressed throughout the Reich.

For three weeks longer a false lull lay over Germany. As a precaution, all documents and weapons of the Black Front were secreted; plans were made for a second line of regional, and unknown, leaders throughout the country to spring into being, and into inter-communication, if the known leaders were arrested; and at the headquarters office of the Black Front in the Wilhelmstrasse — not far from Hitler's Chancery itself — only a telephonist and a couple of Strasser's Black Guards were left.

On February 27th, the docile Reichstag burned. Dr. Goebbels had written prophetically in his diary on the very morning after the National Socialist triumph:

'We set to work at once. . . . We discuss new measures. In a conference with the Leader we arrange measures for combating the Red terror. For the present we shall abstain from direct action. First the Bolshevist attempt at a revolution must burst into flame. At the given moment we shall strike.'

The Reichstag, as I say, obligingly 'burst into flame' four weeks later, on February 27th, was immediately proclaimed to be 'a Bolshevist attempt at revolution', and the Nazis 'struck' — at the enemies of Hitler throughout the country, not only Reds, but also pacifists, Nationalists, Catholics, Democrats, and The Black Front.

On the next morning, February 28th, the Wilhelmstrasse office of the Black Front was raided and wrecked, the few unfortunate men in it taken away, and all the known leaders and members of the Black Front throughout the country, some thousands in all, were rounded-up and taken to concentration camps, where, as I have already explained, some of them still are.

Otto Strasser, on that evening of February 27th, was on his way to the Anhalter Station to take train for his home outside Berlin, when he saw the glow in the sky, asked a taxi-driver what it was, and received the answer, 'The Nazis have fired the Reichstag'. He did not go home, but turned back and spent the night in an hotel; and in this manner began the fantastic journey which is still continuing to-day, seven years later, and at this moment after innumerable adventures has brought him to Paris.

While the Black Front headquarters in Berlin was being ransacked and demolished, Otto Strasser was on his way to a little Thuringian holiday resort which had already been chosen as the first secret headquarters in such an event as this.

From there, he issued the following order to his followers throughout the country: 'All members of the Black Front who are not known as such to the police are immediately to apply for membership of the Army, the National Socialist Party, the SA and SS, and to continue their political activity in legal guise inside those organizations.' This order became known to the Gestapo, and the members of the Black Front who were known and had been arrested underwent a martyrdom in the concentration camps to force them to betray their associates. Corrosive activity from within was the thing that the Nazis feared more than anything else, because it was so difficult to detect.

Thanks to the precautionary selection of these second-line leaders, who were not known to be his men and were therefore not arrested, Otto Strasser was able from his quiet Thuringian resort, by means of simple telephone calls, to keep all the threads of his organization in his hand, to issue orders and receive reports. The Gestapo took some time completely to clamp down the hatches of their terror, and in these early days local telephone calls were not tapped.

But after a week, he received an urgent call which told him, in a hastily improvised code intelligible to him, that one of his helpers had broken under manhandling in a concentration camp and had revealed the approximate locality of Strasser's hiding-place. This telephonic warning came from the Gestapo itself! That is, it came from one of Strasser's Black Front men who, in obedience to orders, had remained at his Nazi post.

At this moment, the hand of the Gestapo first touched Otto Strasser's coat-tails. On receipt of the warning, he fled at once by road to the second secret headquarters, also chosen long in advance, at a village in Bavaria; the next day, as he subsequently learned, the Gestapo arrived at the Thuringian inn where he had been staying under a false name, to arrest him.

Then, at the end of March, he moved to a third secret headquarters, in West Germany. It was a lonely house in the Teutoburger Forest, and from here he called a meeting of his chief helpers in West Germany, choosing for the occasion a quiet hamlet on the Steinhuder Lake. When he and his men foregathered there, they found that some thirty thousand Storm Troopers had chosen the same day and place for a Brown Army parade. With these throngs of jubilant Brown Shirts all round them, Strasser's four men (one of them himself in the Nazi uniform) calmly made their way to the lakeside, discussed the situation, agreed their plans, and parted.

The chase grew hotter, the Gestapo network ever closer, and the concentration camps ever fuller. In the middle of April, Otto Strasser made a dash for his native Bavaria — with the uniformed Nazi, a senior Storm Troop commander, now at the wheel of his car!

They had not been long on the road when they heard behind them the *tara-tara* — a sound like the post-coachman's horn of old — of the Flying Squad, and a police-tender with a Berlin number and a load of SS men drew level and overtook them. The brown-shirted Storm Trooper at the wheel gave the Nazi salute and 'Heil Hitler'; the black-uniformed SS men in the tender did not return it, but drove on. 'That's funny,' said the SA man to Strasser.

A little later, they encountered the tender again, halted on the road. The SS men, all armed, watched them intently as they drove past. 'Herr Doktor', said Strasser's brown-shirted companion, 'I don't like this. I believe they're after you'. (The car was Strasser's own, bearing the number known to be his; it was an ancient vehicle with a top-speed of fifty miles an hour presented to him by an admirer. (He had taken the Storm Troop commander, one of his Black Front men who had remained in the Brown Army in accordance with Strasser's orders, with him to disarm suspicion.)

A little further on, and *tara-tara* sounded again behind them; the SS men overhauled and passed them once more. This cat-and-mouse game was repeated several times, until Strasser sought to trick the pursuers by turning sharply from the main road and pulling up in the market-square of a little town, which was crowded with people come in from the countryside for a political meeting. Strasser dashed to the post office to telephone his wife and tell her of his flight; when he came out the SS tender was parked next to his own car.

The crowds of people in the market place, as he believes, alone prevented a revolver battle at this point. It was getting dark. He drove off, leaving the pursuers out of sight, and told his driver to get the last ounce of speed from the car and turn in at the first farm he came to. Eventually they found one, and swung in, through the great double-doors, into the farmyard, quickly slamming the doors behind them.

A few moments later, they heard again *tara-tara*, and saw the beam of a searchlight, as the tender flashed by, raking the countryside with its light to discover the fugitives if they should have left the main road. They did not think of stopping to look behind those great wooden doors. Strasser and his men lay doggo until the light and *tara-tara* had died away in the distance, then came out and, driving without lights and using by-roads, succeeded in reaching the Chiemsee, in Bavaria, their destination.

Afterwards, through his underground channels of information, Otto Strasser learned that these SS men had indeed been after him and had known that he was in the car. In reporting the failure to arrest him on returning to Berlin, their leader wrote that 'Otto Strasser is known as a violent man who habitually carries a machine-pistol; for that reason, my plan was to wait until darkness fell and then blind his oncoming car with the beam of the searchlight before proceeding to the arrest.'

For the last time, Otto Strasser called together his helpers in Germany — those for the South German districts. They met on the green slopes of the Bavarian Alps, within a few hundred yards of the Austrian frontier, and sat, in bathing drawers, with their papers strewn over the rough-hewn table before the *Almhütte* — one of those simple Alpine huts where the cowherd or the cowherdess lives during the summer, when the cattle pasture in the high meadows which in winter will be snowbound.

At this fantastic *Führerbesprechung*, or conference of leaders, within sight of freedom, the hand of the Gestapo again rested for a moment on Strasser's shoulder. Strasser and three of his chief South German helpers were there; and two women, his hostess at the lonely farmhouse farther down the slope where he was staying, and her servant.

While the nearly naked men were discussing plots and high politics at the table, armed SS men appeared — auxiliary frontier guards on patrol — came across, and demanded to know what they were doing. 'Sun-bathing and having a good time with the girls,' said Strasser, desperately anxious to prevent the SS men from examining the papers on the table. 'Girls?' said his interlocutor, 'I don't see any girls.' 'Why, there they are,' said Strasser pointing to where the two women lay, also in sun-bathing costume, two or three hundred yards away. 'And that's your girl?' asked an SS man suspiciously. 'Of course she is,' said Strasser, and, raising his voice, 'Du, Annerl, komm' her. Come here. Here's a gentleman who wants to know what I'm doing and won't believe you're my girl.'

The respectable married lady who was his hostess was quickwitted enough not to be startled by the familiar *Du* and the insinuation, and played her part nobly. The SS men, obviously suspicious but confused, withdrew and lay down between the four men and the frontier. Then one of them sounded his *Trillerpfeife*, the shrill whistle they carry, and presently, from neighbouring peaks and slopes, came climbing three other SS frontiersmen. They all foregathered in a group and stood, watching and discussing the four men at the table.

Otto Strasser and his men, feigning nonchalance, sat round the table. Never had the beauties of Austria seemed so superb to them. The situation grew embarrassing, when salvation came out of a heaven that had been brilliantly blue and had contained only a blazing sun. It clouded over and released a sudden and torrential downpour of such force that little rivulets, bearing tiny avalanches of stones with them, in a few moments were careering down the mountainsides. The SS men stood their ground for a while and then suddenly decided that their suspicions were not worth getting so wet for. They made off, down the hill. Strasser and his companions dispersed their various ways, Strasser returning by devious routes to his farmhouse.

But the game was up. Four days later, on May 9th, Gregor Strasser, in Berlin, saw the Minister of the Interior, Dr. Frick, who had remained on good terms with him, and learned from him that Göring's men had wind that Otto Strasser was in the neighbourhood of the Chiemsee. He took aeroplane to Munich, sent a warning and a motor car to Otto, in his hide-out, and begged him to flee. Otto, moved by some premonition, felt he could not go without seeing his brother. He made his way in disguise to Munich and there met Gregor, whom he was never to see again, in the house of a mutual friend who was also a senior SS commander; he too retained his friendship with the Strassers from the earlier days.

Gregor Strasser, says his brother, was already a broken man. His part was played out, he could not forget the way he, who had really made the Party, had been vilified and thrown outside in the moment of its triumph, and more, he felt his coming death upon him. He told Otto: 'Göring will shoot us both.' 'Or we him, that is certain,' answered Otto, and he entreated Gregor to accompany him into exile and resume the struggle from across the frontiers. Gregor would not; he could not bring himself to leave his family and his business.

That same night of March 9th, 1933, Otto Strasser was driven to a place in the Bavarian Alps near the Austrian frontier. About midnight, led by a guide who knew every inch of the way, he began to climb, along narrow and precipitous paths made by the hooves of the chamois. As dawn broke on March 10th, 1933, he crossed the frontier.

In Berlin, an Austrian destitute and neer-do-well was absolute master of the Reich. Across the Reich frontiers, at dead of night, a German officer, anti-Red and Revolutionary Socialist made a weary way into Austria.

After a twenty-hour march, Otto Strasser came, on the evening of May 10th, 1933, into Kufstein. He was free, he had shaken off the pursuers, he could take up the fight. He was wrong in thinking this, for the pursuers had not been shaken off, but were still close behind him and were for years to stay close behind him. But he did not know that, and made his way to the new headquarters of his Black Front — Vienna.

In Vienna, the one-man-war was resumed, only three months after Hitler's advent to power and the descent of the Gestapo terror on Germany. In February, the necessary material for the preparation of Otto Strasser's anti-Hitlerist paper had already been sent to Vienna, and from the middle of that month onward it appeared there and was smuggled in thousands of copies into the Reich.

This was relatively simple because The Black Front covered not only Germany, but also Austria, and its organization there was still intact. Strasser's followers in Austria helped in the printing of the paper and in smuggling it across the frontier. It was called, in anticipation of something that afterwards came true, *Der Schwarze Sender* (The Black or Secret Sender).

In addition to the paper itself, small-type pamphlets on thin paper were prepared, things which could be screwed into a tiny ball and swallowed, and these were sent across the frontier, 50,000 at a time. They caused more annoyance to the Nazis there than any other form of attack upon their rule, because the author was a man who had played a leading part in their own movement, and because he could neither be called Socialist, Communist nor Jew.

Very soon, for these reasons, the arm of the Gestapo reached out across the frontier into Austria and again Otto Strasser's coat-tails slithered through its fingers. This is one of the most remarkable of his adventures.

By July 1933 he had been in Vienna for nearly two months, living with a beautifully forged passport and under a false name, with a cousin. In these few weeks, with his enormous energy, he had redoubled the anti-Hitlerist campaign of the Black Front from Vienna, and the flood of pungent literature that was pouring across the frontiers was seriously worrying the Secret Police in the Reich.

At this time, too, as I must interpolate to make the story clear, the Austrian Nazis, on orders from the Reich, were conducting their first campaign, which ended in the rising of July 24th, 1934, and the murder of Chancellor Dollfuss, to conquer Austria by terrorism. In Vienna particularly, but also in many parts of the country, bombs were exploding and violent exploits of many kinds were perpetrated; the people knew that the Nazis were the authors of these things and the feeling everywhere was of tension and suspense.

On the night of July 4th, 1933, Otto Strasser returned to Vienna from a visit to Prague, where, with his habitual foresight, he had been surveying the ground in case Austria should fall to Hitler and the Black Front need to seek yet another secret headquarters. At his dwelling in Vienna, all was dark and he found that his key failed, for some reason, to open the door; nor could he obtain any answer to his knocking.

So he went downstairs and knocked-up the porter, who opened his eyes in surprise when he saw the visitor, and said, 'But, Herr Müller, the police were here to-day and arrested your landlady'. Strasser, though he was taken aback, did not connect this incident with himself, for he was convinced that the Viennese police did not know his real identity, or even if they did, that he would be the last man they would seek — for was not the Austria of Dollfuss fighting for its life against Hitler? But he asked 'How is it that my key won't open the door?' and was told 'Oh, the police have sealed the flat'.

'*So!*' said Strasser, thoughtfully, and after a moment's indecision went into the street. There doubts overtook him and he made up his mind to avoid the house for that night, at least. The drawback to this was that he had returned from Prague with the sum of just one Austrian schilling in his pocket (during all these years, the money problem was an enemy only less mortal than Hitler) and could not afford a lodging. Though the month was July, the night was very cold and he had no overcoat, and not even enough money, as he says, to seek that warmth which the pleasures of the town can provide.

So he walked about all night, and dawn found him waiting eagerly for the first cheap coffee-house to open, where for half of that Austrian schilling he could buy a cup of coffee, with sugar and whipped cream, and a roll.

At last one opened. The sleepy waiter brought him the coffee and the roll and, as every well-trained Viennese *Ober* must, the morning paper. Otto Strasser sipped his coffee, bit the end off his roll, opened the paper, and saw written across it, in flaring headlines, the news that The Black Front had been identified as the author of the bomb outrages that were going on all over Austria; that all the leaders of this criminal organization, seventeen men and two women, had been arrested during the night; but that *the* Leader, one Dr. Otto Strasser, had unfortunately escaped.

Otto Strasser was an alarmed and a stupefied man. He could not, at that time, even guess at an explanation — for was not he, Hitler's arch-enemy, in the anti-Hitlerist Austria of Dollfuss? Why for anything's sake should he and his men try to destroy *this* Austria with bombs? The survival of this Austria meant their survival, its life or death was their life or death. What on earth was the meaning of this ridiculous story? Everybody knew who was throwing the bombs. For what conceivable reason had the anti-Nazi Black Front been saddled with the blame?

Otto Strasser did not know it then, but at his side in the frowsy Viennese café sat an unseen guest — the Gestapo. Its arm was longer than any man would at that time have believed. The explanation only came a year later, in July 1934, when the Nazi rising occurred, Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered, and his own Viennese Chief of Police, Dr. Steinhäusl, was found after the suppression of that revolt to have been one of the Nazi conspirators. He was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, but after Hitler's invasion of Austria was made Viennese Chief of Police again.

Thus in Vienna, where he thought himself safe, Otto Strasser only escaped the clutches of the Gestapo by the merest fluke. Hitler's man, Steinhäusl, was out to get him and nearly had got him. If he had been at home that day, when the police called, Otto Strasser would have been 'kidnapped' across the German frontier, or he would have been in an Austrian prison when Hitler invaded Austria, and in either case he would have been sent to join his brother. Here, again, is one of the reasons why I think that destiny must have something in store for this man; why, otherwise, has destiny so often pulled him from beneath the annihilating wheels?

But on that morning Otto Strasser could not even guess at these things and he was a flabbergasted man, who instinctively felt that he was in danger. He could not think what had happened, but his inner voice told him to get out, and get out quickly. But how? He had no money and did not know a soul in Vienna; his few acquaintances had been arrested that night. He had half a schilling, fifty groschen, say sixpence, in his pocket.

He thought, and thought, and at last hit on an idea which held out a faint hope. There *was* one man whom he knew in Vienna slightly — the man whose secretary his cousin and landlady was, a Jewish journalist in the employ of the Ullstein publishing firm.

To this man's office he went, a long walk right across the city, after a sleepless night and a spoiled breakfast. Giving another false name, he succeeded in gaining admission.

The man behind the table looked up, and horrified surprise suddenly spread over his face. He sprang up, with hands spread before him as if to ward off some awful apparition, and said 'Get out, get out of here, at once'. 'I want a hundred schillings and I'm not going until you give me them,' said Strasser. 'But this is blackmail,' expostulated a frightened and excited man, 'the police are looking for you. Go away.' 'I want a hundred schillings to get to Prague with,' said Strasser, 'and if you don't give them to me I shall stay here and be arrested in your office, and you will be arrested too.'

Frightened though he was, says Strasser, the Jew immediately recalled that the fare to Prague only cost sixty-nine schillings and said so. 'But I want something for a taxi and food,' insisted Strasser. 'Here,' said the harassed man. 'Here you are, take it and go, go quickly.' Strasser took the hundred schillings and said, 'I'll give you a receipt'. Up came the protesting hands again, 'No, no, don't give me a receipt'. 'Then I'll send you the money from Prague.' 'Do what you like, send it or not, but go away from here, go away quickly, and don't send me a receipt. Just go away, go away.'

Pushed out of the door, Strasser again found himself in the street. He was not, as he had thought, a free man in a free land; he was once again a fugitive, and at that time did not even know why. He only knew that he had to escape quickly, and that he now had the money for his fare. He set his face towards the Ring, and then remembered that he had no clothes whatever but those he wore. The others were in his lodging. He decided to take a taxi, and to drive there. If he saw anything suspicious, he would drive past. If not, he would go in and see if a chance existed to get his clothes.

At the house all was quiet. He stopped the taxi, went in, and rang at the porter's lodge, feeling prickly. The man came out, looked at him in surprise, and said 'Aber, Herr Doktor Strasser!' '*Wieso*, Doktor Strasser?' said Strasser, 'What do you mean, Doctor Strasser?' '*Na*, you are Dr. Otto Strasser,' said the man. '*So*, and what of it?' said Strasser. The man smiled confidentially. 'Don't worry, Herr Doktor,' he said, '*Ich bin Sozi*, I'm a Socialist. I've got your clothes here, packed in a bag. The police were here again and I told them you had gone away. They left the flat open and I packed your clothes in case you came back; it's better for you not to go up.'

Only one problem remained, but a stiff one — to get out of Austria. By this time, Otto Strasser assumed that the police had identified him with Herr Müller and had warned all frontier stations to watch for a man with such a passport. The best chance, he thought, would be to try the tram.

For in the middle of Vienna, in those days, just off the main street, was a tram terminus from which trams ran, straight along the main road, to Bratislava, two hours away. Bratislava had once been Pressburg, and had been to Vienna as Windsor to London; but that was in the days of Austria-Hungary, and now Pressburg was Bratislava and lay just across the frontier, in Czechoslovakia. But — the tram still ran. It still said it was going to 'Pressburg', but it still ran, and there was very little supervision of the travellers that used it; many of them were people who came and went every day. Sometimes, passports were not even examined.

It was a chance. Otto Strasser took it. He walked down the Ring, with his bag in his hand, and got on the tram. An hour or two later, he was in Bratislava, in Czechoslovakia. Once again, he had shaken off the pursuit. He was a free man, in a free land. He had not even been asked to show his passport.

Once more the one-man-war had to be begun again at the beginning. He went to Prague. He had one great advantage — good friends, in and outside Germany, who helped with money when they could, and in other ways, particularly in the vital matter of providing him with false passports. This time, he acquired the passport of a supporter in Germany whose appearance and description approximately resembled his own. This man obtained a photograph of Strasser to substitute for his own. Unfortunately, it showed Strasser in the Brown Shirt of the Storm Troops, and this was undesirable. So the brown shirt was painted out and a white-collar and black-tie painted in; and the photograph was then re-photographed; and the ultimate photograph skilfully substituted for that of the original owner of the passport.

In Prague, where he resumed his Black Front work in the office of a friend, Otto Strasser took lodging with an unsuspecting postman and his family. In spite of the shock he had had in Vienna, he felt perfectly safe in Prague, for the Czechs were a united people. Among them were no admirers of Hitler, and it was impossible to imagine the Police Chief of Prague, or even the last errand boy in Prague, being an agent of the Nazis.

He was only left five months in this illusion of security. On the morning of November 25th, 1933, as he lay abed, his corpulent landlady came waddling in, breathless and excited, exclaiming 'Police', and close behind her pressed two Czech detectives with levelled revolvers, who addressed the sleepy Strasser in harsh and voluble Czech. He asked them to speak German, whereon they asked him, in that language, if he were Herr Müller —

the name he had used in Vienna. He denied this, and they demanded his passport.

Fortunately, he had his beautiful new passport, a recent one, issued after Hitler's advent to power and bearing the Reich swastika on it. This completely bewildered the two policemen, who repeatedly exclaimed that Herr Müller *must* live here, and eventually retired, cursing and puzzled. Strasser's landlady, an enormously fat woman, waddled breathlessly back into the room, exclaiming in comic German, 'Outside two policemen more, with revolver, by big motor car, all very cross'.

On this occasion, too, Strasser was more puzzled than alarmed, for he had on his arrival in Prague immediately informed the authorities of his identity and of the name he was living under; as they knew this, he assumed that some mistake had been made in the address, and went off to sleep again. No Czech policeman, he knew, would want to deliver him up to Hitler.

Later, he strolled along to Police Headquarters to ask the Chief of Police why his officials had made such a mistake. On his description of the scene, this official immediately answered that some mystery must be present, because the Prague police had no motor cars whatever and never used them. Inquiry then revealed that nothing of the visit was known to the police. Then it was learned that the waiting motor car, with the four ostensible officials from the Criminal Investigation Department in it, had carried a German number, namely, the IIA of Munich; that the two officials who had waited outside had spoken German with the two who had made the raid; and that one of them had held a gag, or chloroform wad, in his hand, which he threw away in disgust when no captive was brought. This was found in the gutter.

This time the Gestapo visited Otto Strasser in his bed and held a revolver under his very nose.

The chain of events was eventually pieced together thus: Otto Strasser had evidently been seen and followed to his lodging by someone who knew him and knew that in Vienna he passed as Müller, and this man had betrayed him to the Gestapo. The familiar abduction-across-the-frontier was then planned, but the Gestapo needed men for this who spoke fluent Czech and could thus pass themselves off as Czech detectives. To that end they used Sudeten Germans from the mixed-language belt.

These men spoke perfect Czech — but did not know Strasser. The possibility that he would by this time have acquired yet another name and passport had been overlooked, so that the sham agents were completely thrown off the trail by the production of his new, and seemingly good, National-Socialist German passport, and assumed that the informer had made a mistake.

This affair shook Prague badly. For the first time the Czechs realized, in 1933, how near and how daring the enemy was — their enemy, too. Strict precautions were taken to prevent any further exploits of the same kind. But these precautions were restricted to Prague, and for this reason another fantastic stroke of the Gestapo against Otto Strasser and his friends had a bloody end, as I shall tell.

Soon after this, another very remarkable thing happened to Otto Strasser, an adventure the end of which has not yet come, and which may eventually dovetail into the mysterious affair of the bomb explosion which occurred at Munich after the present war had begun.

About the turn of the year 1934, soon after the attempted abduction by the sham Czech detectives, a man called on Otto Strasser in Prague in whom he was astonished to recognize one Constantin, who had for many years been a member of his Black Front.

'Why, how on earth did you contrive to miss being sent to a concentration camp?' asked Strasser.

'They offered me ten thousand marks and a high post in the SA, if I could succeed in killing you,' said Constantin, and gravely handed Strasser a phial, adding 'This is the poison'.

Otto Strasser says that Constantin, whom he regarded as a loyal helper, had had a few drinks, so that he wondered if the man knew just what he was saying. To be on the safe side, he went with Constantin, later, to the political police in Prague, with whom he remained in close touch throughout his stay there, and had the contents of the phial examined. 'It was prussic acid,' he says, 'and enough to poison a regiment.'

Constantin then explained further that the Gestapo had told him Strasser would be sure to invite him to a meal and he should pour the poison in Strasser's beer or coffee. 'I thought the best thing to do was to agree to come to Prague, so that I could see you, and I guessed that you would find a way to get me out of this, for I shall have to have some plausible excuse for returning without having killed you.'

This was easily arranged. The phial was given back to Constantin and he was supplied with an order of expulsion from Czechoslovakia so worded that he appeared to have been detained at the frontier and never to have been allowed as far as Prague. With this in his possession, he went off and from that day to this Otto Strasser has never heard another word of him.

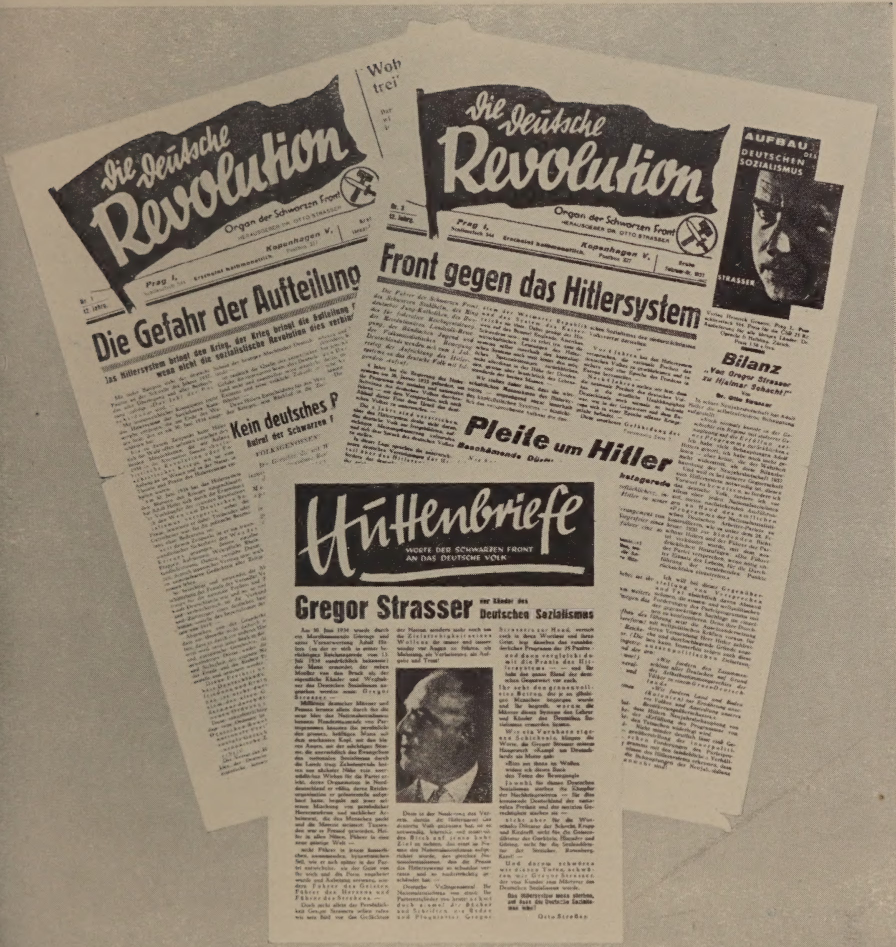
Nevertheless, there was a sequel, and a strange one. A former inmate of the Oranienburg concentration camp, now in France, saw in the press in November 1939, the pictures, issued by the Gestapo, of the mysterious man 'Georg Elser' who is supposed to have planted the bomb in the Bürgerbräukeller at Munich and was alleged by the Gestapo to have been the tool, in this act, of Otto Strasser and the British Secret Service. This man claimed to recognize in the pictures of 'Georg Elser' one Constantin, whom he had known at Oranienburg. Constantin, he said, was one of the better-treated prisoners in the camp and told him one day that he had been sent to Oranienburg by the Gestapo as punishment for his failure in a mission entrusted to him. This mission — as Constantin told his fellow-prisoner — was to go to Prague, to gain the confidence of Strasser, and to find out what relations Strasser entertained with the Czechoslovak Government.

If this is true, the man 'Georg Elser' is thus none other than that Constantin who went to Prague, and the handing-over of the poison was actually but another trick to get inside Strasser's guard. And if that is the case, 'George Elser' already stands revealed as an agent of the Gestapo. Unfortunately the chain cannot be quite completed. The missing link in it is that Otto Strasser either does not recognize, or will not admit that he recognizes, Constantin in the picture of 'Georg Elser'. 'I am unable to recognize Constantin in these photographs,' he says, 'but then they do not resemble each other. They give me the impression that either the man in the pictures has been made up — he might be wearing a wig, for instance — or that the photographs have been touched up. I cannot recognize anybody; but with the Gestapo, you never know.'

So there is an episode in Otto Strasser's tale of strange adventure that has already had one sequel, and may yet have a second sequel.

In Prague, Otto Strasser continued to work hard at his anti-Hitlerist campaign. His energy is hard to believe. During these crowded years he somehow found time to write several books, which I shall describe later. Some of them are of much interest, and I wonder that none has yet been translated into English. All this time, the production of miniature anti-Hitlerist newspapers, of pamphlets and letters, was going on apace. From Czechoslovakia, as from Austria, they were smuggled in large quantities into the Reich, by reckless men who used the most audacious methods, who continually risked, and on several occasions lost their lives, for no other payment than the hope of contributing to the end of Hitler.

Germans, Sudeten-Germans, and even Czechs, helped in the work. They crossed the frontiers by secret paths at mid of night with knapsacks on their backs containing thousands of these anti-Hitlerist flimsies, already con-



Die deutsche Revolution

Organ der Schwarzen Front

HERAUSGEBER DR. OTTO STRASSER

Prag I.

Erscheint halbmonatlich.

Kopenhagen V.

Nr. 1

12. Jahrg.

Die Gefahr der Aufteilung

Das Hitlersystem bringt den Krieg, der Krieg bringt die Aufteilung, wenn nicht die sozialistische Revolution dies verhin

Kein deutsches P

Aufruf der Schwarzen F

FOLKSGENOSSEN!

Die deutsche Revolution

Organ der Schwarzen Front

HERAUSGEBER DR. OTTO STRASSER

Prag I.

Erscheint halbmonatlich.

Kopenhagen V.

Nr. 2

12. Jahrg.

Front gegen das Hitlersystem

Pleite um Hitler

Beschämende Dürre

AUFBAU DES DEUTSCHEN SOZIALISMUS

STRASSER

Bilanz

„Von Gregor Strasser zu Hjalmar Schacht!"

Von Dr. Otto Strasser

Hüttenbriefe

WORTE DER SCHWARZEN FRONT AN DAS DEUTSCHE VOLK

Gregor Strasser der Künder des Deutschen Sozialismus

Otto Straßer

THREE SPECIMENS OF THE MINIATURE ANTI-HITLERIST NEWSPAPERS PRINTED ON FLIMSY PAPER BY OTTO STRASSER AND SMUGGLED INTO GERMANY FROM AUSTRIA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND DENMARK

tained in envelopes stamped, with German stamps, ready for posting. When they reached Leipzig or Dresden, and had posted their burdens at some main post office, they would buy enough stamps for the next consignment and return for more.[1]

Once, Otto Strasser had an envelope of the German Medical Association sent to him in Prague and had fifty thousand facsimiles made there. These he filled with his leaflets, leaving the flap unstuck, and posted them, in Germany, as printed matter! On another occasion, he had the letterheads of the German Jurists Association similarly copied; but that piously Hitlerist body must have had a shock when it learned of the literature that was being distributed in Germany on paper bearing its imprint.

Another method used by Otto Strasser in his one-man-war was to smuggle into Germany, and into the hands of his supporters there, millions of glued, stick-on labels, rather bigger than an ordinary postage stamp. These bore the sword-and-hammer badge of the Black Front and some such legend as 'The Black Front will oust

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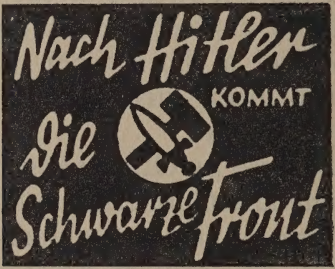
[1] This buying of German postage stamps, which had to be smuggled back to Otto Strasser in Prague and used for stamping new consignments of postal propaganda, which in their turn had to be smuggled into Germany and posted there, was in itself a most dangerous undertaking, for the Secret Police were doing their utmost to trace the source of the leaflets, and had probably instructed the post offices to keep a watch on anyone buying large quantities of stamps.

This very danger, as it is interesting to recall, caused the British authorities, in the 1914-1918 war, to forge German, Austrian and Bavarian stamps, so that the agents who carried the British propaganda leaflets across neutral frontiers for posting inside the enemy countries should not need to endanger their lives by buying large quantities of stamps at the post offices. These 'propaganda forgeries' were apparently never actually used, because the war ended just when they were ready, and for that reason none bearing a postmark has ever been discovered. But unused specimens found their way through underground channels to the stamp-dealing market and are to-day sought by collectors.

Hitler'. One of them is reproduced on this page. These were pasted all over Germany — on doors, walls, windows, trains, trams, pavements, hoardings, National Socialist Party offices, Brown Shirt headquarters, military barracks and the like. It was so simple to hold one in the palm of the hand and swiftly stick it on in passing that it was almost impossible to catch the distributors of these stamps, which sometimes appeared in the most unexpected places — for instance, on the desks of Nazi leaders and the like.



At the beginning of March 1934, the shadow of the Gestapo fell across Strasser's path again. He gave a lecture on National Socialism at Prague University, which was widely reported, and the next day received the visit of a well-dressed Dutch gentleman, one Mr. Frank, who in faulty German, interspersed with Dutch and English words expressed his admiration of the lecture and offered Strasser, on behalf of an 'American anti-Nazi organization' which he did not name, his financial support. He was accompanied — this is a particularly interesting example of the ingenuity of Gestapo methods — by a Jewish lawyer of Prague, Dr. Soundso, to whose sister he was said to be engaged. The use of Jewish agents by the Gestapo is a chapter to itself, and one of the most interesting, in that dark story.

Mr. Frank offered, without any conditions, to pay for five thousand copies of each number of Otto Strasser's weekly paper, which was being smuggled into Germany in the manner I have described, for a period of three months, in token of his sympathy with the cause; the genuineness of this sympathy was subtly underlined by the presence of his Jewish friend. The money was paid on the spot. (At the end of this episode, Otto Strasser was thus the richer by some 60,000 Czech crowns of Gestapo money, which had gone to swell the floods of anti-Hitlerist propaganda that was crossing the frontier, and this is his happiest memory of the one-man-war.)

At the end of the three months Mr. Frank appeared in Prague again, with a pressing invitation to Strasser to come to Paris and there meet Mr. Frank's 'chief', in the middle of June 1934. In the meantime Strasser had asked the Prague police about both Mr. Frank and his Jewish lawyer, and been told that nothing was known of Mr. Frank save that he had a good *British* passport, while the Jewish faith of his companion, Dr. Soundso, seemed to speak for Mr. Frank's good faith.

On this, Strasser went to Paris, and met Mr. Frank, who said that his 'chief' had unfortunately had to go to Saarbrücken (in the Saar Territory, not at that time reunited with Germany) to meet Konrad Heiden (the anti-Hitlerist writer) and would await Strasser there. This seemed plausible, for Heiden lived there and an anti-Hitler-Chief might well desire to meet him.

So Strasser agreed to go to Saarbrücken, but without telling Mr. Frank that he knew Konrad Heiden well; on arrival he visited that writer and learned that he had never heard of Mr. Frank, of the anti-Hitler organization, or of his 'chief'. Strasser then went on to keep his appointment with Mr. Frank, but, having been made suspicious, he noticed with still greater suspicion that between twenty and thirty SS men, whom his expert eye at once recognized by their high boots, their husky appearance, and their general behaviour, were standing about before the hotel. He was made still further suspicious by the manner of Mr. Frank, who was in a state of extreme nervousness, and continually left the room 'to telephone', although the room had a telephone. The fact that the German frontier was but ten minutes distant recurred forcibly to Strasser at this point, and the beauties of Saarbrücken, as the beauties of Austria on a former occasion, suddenly appeared stupendous to him.

He had to think quickly and find a way out of a trap. Telling Mr. Frank that he would gladly wait for the 'chief', who still had not appeared, but must first postpone a meeting which he had previously arranged, he left the room, disarming any suspicion on Mr. Frank's part by leaving his trunk behind. Then he walked calmly down the stairs, through the surprised SS men outside, and drove away in a taxi.

But Mr. Frank was persistent, and at the beginning of the next month, July 1934, appeared in Prague again and overwhelmed Strasser with reproaches for his desertion at Saarbrücken. He invited him forthwith to accompany him in a special aeroplane to London, and Strasser, with a broad smile, declined. On this Mr. Frank said: 'If you don't trust me, I am willing for your friend Dr. Hebrew to pilot the aeroplane'.

This was another most illuminating example of Gestapo methods. Dr. Hebrew, a qualified pilot, was another Jew, the son of the proprietor of a big store in the Leipzigerstrasse in Berlin. He was in Prague as 'a fugitive from Hitlerist oppression' and had there met a school friend of his, one Franke, who was a collaborator with Strasser. By this means, he had come to know Strasser, who finds the Streicher-Stürmer form of anti-Semitism, as practised in Hitler's Germany, as stupid as it is repugnant, but in the Fourth Reich he dreams of would retain, in dignified form, measures of restriction against the excessive spread of Jewish influence. Dr. Hebrew had presented himself to Strasser as a violently resentful 'victim of Hitlerist persecution'.

Put a little off his guard, once more, by this apparent earnest of good faith — for Dr. Hebrew seemed above suspicion in his anti-Hitlerism — Strasser nevertheless telephoned the Chief of Police for an interview before making a decision. Dr. Hebrew overheard this telephone conversation, and when the police went to arrest Mr. Frank he was flown. Thereon Dr. Hebrew was arrested and the whole plot came to light. Mr. Frank (whose secretary was also arrested) was actually Dr. Wenzel Heindl, the head of the anti-Black Front section of the Gestapo. The abduction of Strasser at Saarbrücken had only failed through the potential victim's awakened suspicions.

The most interesting figure in this episode was that of

Dr. Hebrew, who eventually confessed that he had been promised 'rehabilitation as an Aryan' for his part in the plot. On this bait, he bit. He was to have piloted the aeroplane, with Strasser and Mr. Frank in it, and to have landed in Germany. He received a long sentence of imprisonment from the Czechs, but afterwards became again a Gestapo agent and was last heard of in Copenhagen.

The sympathy which this type of man can claim, and usually enjoy, as a Jew, puts him among the most dangerous of Gestapo agents. Strasser, strangely, bears him no mortal illwill. But Strasser's hatreds are not quite clear to me. Although his war is against Hitler, his personal hatred is less for Hitler than for Göring, whom he regards as the murderer of his brother; Heydrich, the blond assistant of Heinrich Himmler, whom he believes to have been the actual gunman; and Goebbels, in whom he sees the traitor who was chiefly responsible for the defeat of the Strassers in the struggle for the soul of the National Socialist Party.

But the upshot of it all was that the Gestapo, once more, had Otto Strasser in its hands and let him slip through its fingers, and that he chortles to-day at the thought of those 60,000 Czech crowns.

Now came the most dramatic of all the acts in this vendetta of one man against a nation. It is a story that deserves a book or a play to itself.

A lonely inn, with a river flowing by. A lonely exile, fighting the men who outlawed him with the weapons of modern science. Avengers, with revolvers in their hands. The decoy, the beautiful blonde — incredible, but she *was* blonde and most beautiful. The trap, the

[*facing:* GOEBBELS AND GÖERING

exchange of shots, the dying blonde and the dying exile. The startled, cowed innkeeper. The stampeding feet of the fugitive gunmen. The staunching of the blonde's blood in the river near by. The hurtling getaway in a fast motor car. The dash across the frontier.

Does it not all sound too bad to be true? And yet it all happened, just like that, the most fantastic thing in all this crazy Odyssey. This story, alone, justifies this whole book, if nothing else does. When I heard it, I had to write it. I cannot think why anybody can be bothered to read detective stories, when the world about us offers such things. Believe it or not, but I once knew a writer, a first-class writer, who was given a contract to write a series of short stories for a periodical read by masses of English people, and though he needed the money badly he had to send back the contract because his stories were required to conform to these rules, and this side of the grave he couldn't do it: 'They should be about pleasant likeable people; they should have plenty of action; they should tell of passion without sex; they should have a metropolitan setting; and remember that this magazine is much read at Eton and Harrow.'

Can you beat it? What sort of story fits into this frame? One about a castrated Don Juan dashing along Piccadilly with a Glamour Girl in a racing motor car and an old school tie, I suppose. And in a world where such things happen as the story I have now to tell! Listen to the story of Zahoři — pronounced, if I may dangerously air my little knowledge, Zahorzhi.

In the autumn of 1934, when Mr. Frank had withdrawn from the chase, the name of Otto Strasser's newspaper, *The Secret Sender*, came true. He built secretly, and secretly operated, a Secret Sender.

At this present moment, when we are at war, this has become a commonplace. The Governments have millions to spend. From dozens of stations, every night, come voices, to which the Reich Germans eagerly listen, telling the tale of Hitler's crimes.

When I was in Paris, talking with Otto Strasser about this very book, the air was fouled every night by something called *Der Freiheitssender* — The Freedom Sender, or Liberty Radio. This dishonest fake pretended to be operating from within Germany. Every night you could hear the speaker telling how the Gestapo were close behind him, but to-morrow, no matter what the Gestapo did, he would pop up in Cologne, or in Hamburg, or in Breslau, or somewhere else. And anybody who cares to, and has not been in Germany, may believe this, if he be credulous enough. To anybody who knows Germany, and the closeness of the Gestapo net, the thing is farcical. Liberty Radio, when I was in Paris, was operating from Paris, and the Germans must have laughed themselves into fits when they heard it.

But for one man, poor, hunted and friendless, in 1934, to build and operate a Secret Sender, only a few miles from the borders of the Reich itself — that was a feat, if you like. This was the first Secret Sender, and the only Secret Sender that ever deserved the name, for it was operated by real men who risked their lives, as one of them lost his life, not by cosmopolitan buffoons working in the safety of a distant capital.

This was the greatest achievement of Otto Strasser in his one-man-war against Hitler. It was not his own achievement alone; it was only made possible by the skill of another brave man, Rudolf Formis, his close friend and one of the best radio engineers Germany ever had.

Formis, a small, dauntless man, did brilliant service with the Germans in Palestine in the World War (1914-18). He held a diploma for having built the first wireless reception apparatus ever used in Germany, and was the author of many inventions used by the German radio, particularly the short-wave radio, to-day.

His exceptional skill brought him to high office in the German radio organization, at last to the post of chief engineer for the Stuttgart Sender. In this post, he performed audacious exploits which made his name known throughout Germany. One of the earliest members of the Black Front, he demonstrated his contempt of Hitler, when Hitler became Chancellor, by cutting the cable during the transmission of an important speech of Hitler at Stuttgart. The entire Gestapo buzzed with feverish activity after this incident, but the culprit was never found. But when a series of 'technical defects' occurred during the transmission of Hitler's speeches from Stuttgart, Formis was dismissed and arrested. Luck enabled him to escape, and *his* crazy Odyssey began. It led him, by way of Austria, Turkey and Hungary, to his friend Otto Strasser in Prague. In Rudolf Formis, I commend you again to a German of the type that ought to be at the top in Germany; then, all might be well.

The result of this reunion in Prague was that in the autumn of 1934 Heinrich Himmler, the Gestapo chief, and his assistant Heydrich, an unusually handsome and revolting mass-murderer, called the senior officials of the Gestapo together and told them that The Black Front Sender, which for some time past had been dinning hatred of Hitler into the ears of millions of enchanted Germans, must at all costs be found and destroyed.

This was Formis's work. He had given Strasser the idea of a 'radio-war' against Hitler, and planned it in detail. The main obstacle was the want of money. The Black Front was a purely German organization, without the normal, usually Jewish, sources of financial support which are open to all other, internationally-affiliated, anti-Hitlerist organizations. But somehow these two men managed to smuggle funds from their friends in Germany, in spite of the stringent German supervision, and the work began.

The most important thing was the choice of a site for the Sender. It had to be technically suitable, for transmissions, and yet secret — secret from the Czech authorities, secret from the Gestapo. At last, Strasser and Formis found, about forty miles south-west of Prague, in the valley of the Moldau, that river which in such beauty runs through Prague itself, a lonely weekend inn, bearing the lovely name of Zahoři. 'Behind the hills'! It was ideal. The owner did not bother himself overmuch with the strange activities of his new, and permanent, guests. He was a good Czech patriot, anyway; he died, afterwards. Autumn was taking all his other guests away; the valley grew chill. The spot was ideally lonely; or rather, that fatal loneliness then seemed ideal.

In this secluded spot, Rudolf Formis, German officer, patriot and anti-Hitlerist, built his Secret Sender. It was, as experts tell me, a technical marvel, and is — or at any rate was, until Hitler invaded Prague and I left Prague — one of the chief exhibits of the Czechoslovak Postal Museum. It was something entirely new. From this Sender, the news and views of The Black Front were delivered three times daily, in three transmissions of an hour each, into the heart of Hitlerist Germany. The Sender was cunningly built into the rafters of the loft of the little inn; in Formis's bedroom, only the microphone was to be seen. He could lie abed and open his heart to his fellow-Germans.

Neither Strasser nor Formis, after all they had been through, could have forgotten the danger they were in, or have gone in a sense of false security. They knew that their lives were at stake. And nevertheless — the Gestapo found them and struck. The real culprit, as Otto Strasser says, was their chronic need of money, which harassed and hampered them at every move. Formis went armed, and whenever the monetary position allowed, an armed companion went out to Zahoři to stay with him, but that was seldom, and Strasser had to be in Prague.

Strasser's opinion is that the second armed companion would have saved Formis. My own opinion is that even the second armed companion, if he had been there, might not have saved Formis. These beautiful blondes! But perhaps I am wrong. Indeed, on second thoughts I think I am. What a tragedy.

On January 16th, 1935, Strasser was at Zahoři, and saw Formis for the last time. He brought him new gramophone records of recorded speeches to the German people; these were changed every month.

He also asked Formis if he had noticed anything suspicious. Formis answered that on the previous day, January 15th, a German couple, a pair of lovers, had been there, one Hans Müller, a business man from Kiel, and one Edith Kersbach, who was a games-teacher from Berlin and an exceptionally beautiful girl with golden hair.

Strasser immediately told Formis that he 'didn't like the sound of it', and advised him to have the innkeeper ask the police to check their papers and have a look at them. But Formis said he thought them to have been 'nice, harmless people'.

Consider that, 'nice, harmless people'. It is not strange that a man who has knocked about the world, and fought in Palestine, who has learned about women from 'er in this country and that, and who knows that the Gestapo is close behind him and is merciless, is it not strange that such a man should be immediately blinded and bereft of all his senses and all his caution, and despoiled of his very life, by some nitwit of a blonde who comes along and smiles challengingly at him and allows her hand artlessly to rest a moment on his arm and her thigh to rub against his and has cold murder in her heart for a man she has never seen before and is saying by signs to some other man, this is the man you want, go on, kill him, all probably because she likes some other, third man — ugh, these lice. But happily, she paid.

Because Formis did not tell Strasser — perhaps he had forgotten it, or perhaps he held it to be unimportant, or maybe he did not want Strasser to think that he had looked upon the blonde and lo, she was good — that on the day before she had pretended to be cross with her lover, and had snuggled up to Formis, and said 'Let's be photographed together and make this grumpy fellow jealous'. Whereon Formis and the blonde were photographed together, arm-in-arm, by the smiling, attentive waiter, and the next day, as was later ascertained, the grumpy Hans Müller flew to Berlin with the photograph to make sure that Formis was the right man, and the Gestapo examined the picture and said, 'Yes, this is the man we want, go on, get him'.

(You may be wondering how the Gestapo knew where to look and whom to seek. It is simple. The good Dr. Hebrew, who had been promised 'rehabilitation as an Aryan', told them.)

So Hans Müller of the Gestapo, accompanied now by a friend, whose passport-name was Gerhard Schubert, also of the Gestapo, took aeroplane back to Prague, and with the beautiful Edith the three — this was also subsequently ascertained — had a gay time in the bars of Prague, and this is only just, because Edith's gay life was to be a short one. On January 21st they stayed the night at Stechovice, not far from Zahoři, and had their fast Mercedes car overhauled, and then they were all set.

On January 23rd, Edith and her Hans Müller returned to Zahoři. They were received with cautious reserve by the innkeeper and Rudolf Formis, who had been put on his guard, but not enough — this was the father and mother of all blondes — by Strasser.

It was late. Neither the innkeeper nor the local police had a telephone, so that the police check-up recommended by Strasser could not take place that night. It would not have yielded much result, anyway; the passports of these three were as good as platinum.

Hans Müller, moreover, was *terribly* tired and had a *terrible* headache, and went immediately to bed. In the picture of the hotel, reproduced opposite, you will see the layout. His bedroom, which was also that of Edith, was on the first floor; two doors beyond it was Formis's room.

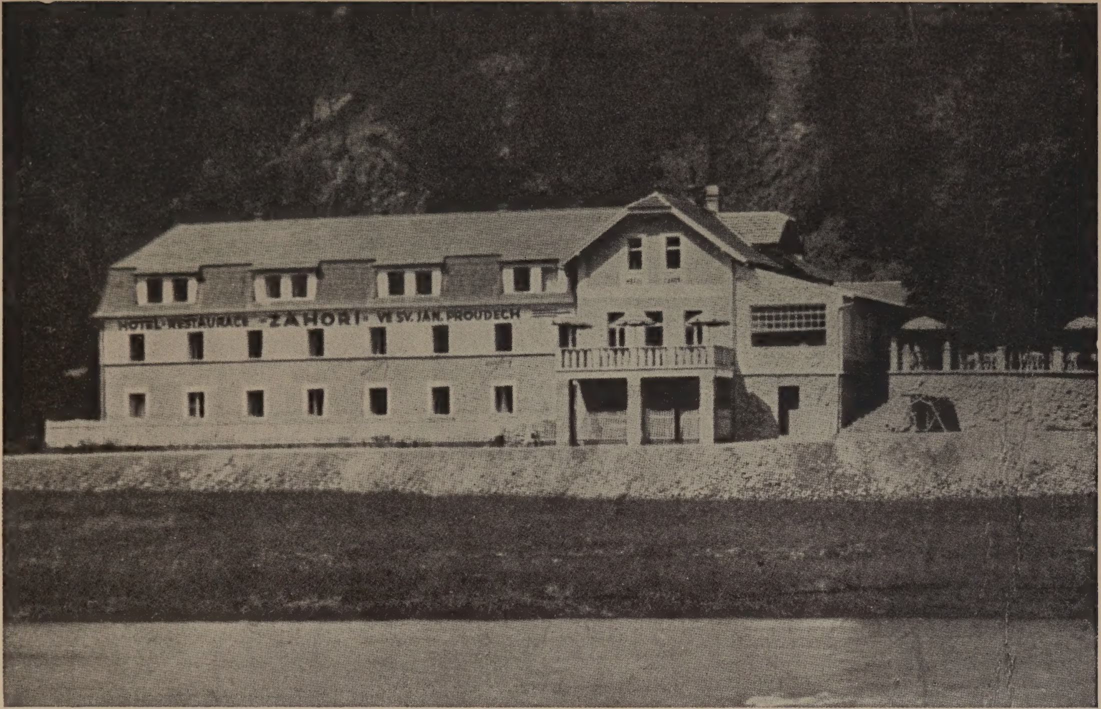
Formis and Edith remained together in the *Gastzimmer*, or sitting-room, for an hour and a half after Müller went to bed. Edith now unburdened herself, told the whole tale of her lovelornness, of the brutality of her lover.

She did not know she was about to die, this strumpet, and she played a marvellous part. The artless pat on the hand; the accidental touch; the lingering glance. At 9.30 in the evening, when the innkeeper and his family made their way to their rooms in the far wing of the hotel, Edith and Formis sat together, the best of friends.

Nevertheless, I think Formis may have been latently suspicious, that his inner man may instinctively have distrusted the whole pantomime, but perhaps he belonged to those men who simply cannot bring themselves to box such a woman's ears. Anyway, at 10 o'clock they rose to go to bed and went upstairs, along the corridor, where Edith and her lover had room Number Three, and Formis the room two doors farther on, Number Seven.

Only Hans Müller and Gerhard Schubert know exactly what happened then; they were inside Room Number Three.

I have studied the layout and the details that are known very closely, and I think that Edith, who held one


HOTEL-RESTAURACE "ZAHORI" V SV. JAN. PROUDECH

THE INN AT ZAHOŘI

The first-floor window half hidden behind the left-hand umbrella is that of the room occupied by EDITH KERSBACH; from it she was carried, dying, down the rope ladder by her accomplices. The window beneath the letter 'N' is that of the room occupied by FORMIS. The Secret Sender was built into the loft at the extreme left. In the foreground runs the River Moldau

of Formis's hands in hers, opened the door of her room, as if to say good-night to him, and then tried to pull him in with her.

His latent suspicions awoke and he drew back. She drove her claws into him and tried to *drag* him in; the lacerations of the she-cat were found carved deep in his wrist.

And then — did he manage to draw his revolver and shoot her, or did she get one of the bullets that were meant for him? That we shall never know, unless Hans Müller or Gerhard Schubert speaks, and that is not likely.

Anyway, about 10 o'clock the obliging waiter, who slept in the basement, was awakened by the noise of many revolver shots. As he rushed upstairs, he was confronted by an unknown man with a revolver in each hand. He fell back, down the stairs, but first he saw Hans Müller dragging the body of Formis along the corridor to Room Number Seven, heard Edith herself screaming in mortal anguish. The unknown man (who was Schubert) drove the waiter and the chambermaid, who had also appeared, in curl-papers, on the scene, down the stairs and into the basement, where he locked the door on them. There, shut in, they heard further bangs and noises, but were too frightened to move. The innkeeper and his family, in the far wing, neither saw nor heard anything of what was afoot.

Later, as rolling black smoke filled the basement, the captives, in fear of suffocation, broke out through the window and awakened the innkeeper. With the waiter, he rushed through this nightmare inn to the place of the tragedy. In Room Number Seven they found the petrolsoaked body of Formis, with two incendiary bombs, which had been prevented by the masses of smoke from taking full effect; they had only smoked and smouldered, not burst into flame. The microphone had been smashed to pieces by the murderers, but the Secret Sender itself, concealed in the loft, they never found.

A strange scene, now, in the chill and lonely valley. Clouds of smoke pouring from the inn. The waiter, rushing along the dark road to the nearest village. A sleepy and bemused village policeman, rushing back along the dark road to the lonely inn. Telephone calls from the village post office to Prague. Endless delays, before the police of the nearest town, the police at the frontier, could be reached. Meanwhile, the Mercedes car dashed through the night, dashed through the frontier posts without stopping. After that, the Czech frontier police always kept the barriers down — but only after that.

They found, the next day, a rope-ladder hanging from the window of Edith's room. That was how the unknown gunman, Gerhard Schubert, got in. They found, in Formis's head, a bullet, and in his chest two more. They found that petrol had been poured over his body, but had not caught fire. They found blood on the rope-ladder. The two gunmen had lowered Edith that way. In the river that runs past the little inn they washed her wounds; the bloodstained handkerchief was found there.

By a strange chance, the racing Mercedes was stopped in the township of Loboshitz at one o'clock in the morning, because of its excessive speed. The driver's papers were in order, and it was allowed to go. The policeman Boehm says that it only had two occupants, the two men who sat in the front seats. In the back seat was 'a mound of rugs and coats'. That was Edith.

Later inquiries revealed that the Mercedes car crossed the German frontier between 4 and 5 o'clock in the morning. In the Saxon township of Königsstein the two men brought Edith to a hospital. The doctors examined her and told them that she must be taken to Dresden immediately, for an operation. On the way there she died. (All these facts were established through Otto Strasser's subterranean channels of information.)

I apologize to all good strumpets for calling her a strumpet. I have a large vocabulary, but find no word in it for this — for Edith Kersbach, who was young, fair-haired, lovely, and a sports-mistress.

Müller and Schubert received the award of 10,000 marks which the Gestapo had put on Formis's head (as Otto Strasser's informants in Germany reported to him) and have a high place on the list of people with whom scores have to be settled when Hitler's regime is overthrown.

The methods of the German propaganda and Gestapo machine in this exploit are interesting to study. Just as Hitler's invasions and annexations were always heralded by a great press campaign of complaint about the provocation offered by the country to be attacked, whether it was called Austria, Czechoslovakia, or Poland, so was this killing of one man in another country first announced with the usual plaint about intolerable provocation, in the German press.

The passion of the German mind for self-justification-in-advance, whether the potential victim be a State or an individual, is ineradicable. It is strange that Otto Strasser and Rudolf Formis, who were Germans themselves and knew the men and the methods they had to fear, did not hear the warning bell in that violent attack on Strasser and his 'intolerable Secret Sender' which appeared in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on January 12th, 1935 — the day before the murderers crossed the frontier in search of Formis!

Though the number of the Mercedes car, with full details of its occupants and their papers, was given, the German Government blandly answered that it had never heard of such a car, of such persons, or of such passports and triptychs, and when the Czechoslovak Government renewed its formal protests, the reply was that all research had been fruitless; no trace whatever of such a car, or of the passengers supposed to have travelled in it, could be found.

But four and a half years later, when the present war had begun and the Munich bomb explosion occurred, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, in accusing Otto Strasser and the British Intelligence Service of causing this, stated that his Secret Sender 'was destroyed on January 26th, 1935, by two SS leaders in execution of their orders'.

Actually, the Sender was not destroyed, but confiscated by the Czech police. Otto Strasser lost in Formis one of his most valuable and valorous helpers, as well as a weapon against Hitler which had become the talk of Germany.

Although the Gestapo had once more failed to kill him,

OTTO STRASSER (right) AT THE GRAVE OF RUDOLF FORMIS it had dealt him a heavy blow, and Formis was also one of his closest personal friends. In the picture published opposite, you see Otto Strasser, and another Black Front man, at Formis's grave.

Once again, he had to start the one-man-war from the beginning. The episodes of Dr. Pollack and Dr. Hebrew had shown him that no man was to be trusted, the murder of Formis had proved how close the Gestapo still were behind him.

In Prague, the German Minister repeatedly inquired of the Czechoslovak Government 'when Dr. Otto Strasser is to be tried for operating a Secret Sender'; the harassed Prague Government, too, was paying for the hospitality it had given such refugees-from-Hitlerist-tyranny as Dr. Hebrew.

On January 6th, 1936, Strasser was duly sentenced to four months hard labour, without alleviating circumstances. The sentence was confirmed on appeal. It was never served, because under Czech law, if a plea for the quashing of a sentence were lodged on some legal grounds, the highest authority in the State had to confirm or quash it. The law, however, apparently laid down no time-limit for such a decision, and President Edouard Benesh just put the document back in his 'Pending' file each time it was put before him.

Two Czechoslovak years remained to Strasser and he used them to the full. He continued to publish his paper, until the hard-pressed Czechoslovak Government suppressed it. He continued the leaflet-war across the frontier. Unfortunately, some of the most stirring episodes of the one-man-war in this field cannot yet be told; this would imperil the lives of men who still live. Some were caught, brought before the People's Court and sentenced to death. Some were killed. Exploits were planned and carried out which still cannot be recounted.

Strasser spared neither his nerves, his strength, nor his affections; he used them all unsparingly, as a man should, and remained in spite of everything a merry fellow, a citizen of the world, a good German, a good European, and a Revolutionary Socialist.

Then came Munich and the British ultimatum to the Czechoslovaks to surrender to the German demands. Once again, the pursuers reached out a hand that nearly touched Strasser's shoulder. If he had stayed in Czechoslovakia after that, he would six months later have been caught like a rat in a trap, on that day, March 15th, 1939, when Hitler's armies closed in on Prague from all sides; even destiny would have needed to rack its brains to get him out of that. So, while those armies were taking their first slice of Czechoslovakia — the Sudetenland — he took an aeroplane, together with Wenzel Jaksch, the Sudeten-German Socialist leader, and flew away, over their heads.

In the country he left behind him, the tragedy of Zahoři continued. It was not finished, is not yet finished. Formis's life was not the only life that was destroyed by it. The innkeeper, already a sick man, had his death hastened by the events of that January night and the days that followed it. His wife and daughter came to Prague and leased a little inn there. When Hitler arrived, the Gestapo sought them out. The daughter, a good friend and admirer of Strasser, was put in a concentration camp. A bomb was planted in the inn.

Otto Strasser, now in almost-penury, found quarters, with his wife and children, in a little hamlet, Herrliberg, near Zürich. The German frontier was not much more than a stone's throw away, and this, again, impressed the beauties of Switzerland on his mind. Here he had, from respect for Swiss hospitality, to curtail operations in his one-man-war, though his friends in Germany continued to smuggle news and reports out to him; but the war was continued on a small scale from Copenhagen, where one of his chief helpers held the strings of the Black Front together, and issued orders to the Black Front in Germany.

From Switzerland, Otto Strasser tried vainly to get to France or England. None would have him. The 'refugees from Hitlerist oppression' were admitted and petted in thousands, everywhere. For a man like this, the doors were closed. Here was 'a Red', a man who was 'too anti-Hitler'. None would ever have dreamed of describing this man as 'a victim of persecution'. He was this, though it would never occur to him to think of himself in such terms; he is, as I say, a man.

The war came and, a few weeks after its beginning, on November 8th, 1939, when the anniversary of that first Hitlerist Putsch of 1923 was being celebrated, according to tradition, by the Old Guard of National Socialism in the Bürgerbräukeller at Munich, the bomb exploded which was either meant to kill Hitler or, like the Reichstag Fire, was the act of his own men, a new bloodcurdler for the German masses, who simply cannot live without the feeling that they are being encircled and plotted against by secret and sinister foes. Like Tartarin of Tarascon, the Germans love to feel that 'they' are lurking in the shadows, waiting to spring.

Within a few hours of the bomb explosion the German police informed the Swiss authorities that Otto Strasser was the organizer of the plot (Himmler's statement issued on November 21st said that Georg Elser, the man arrested for complicity in the night of November 8th-9th, only 'confessed', and incriminated Strasser, after six days of obstinate denials, namely, on November 14th; but he apparently knew on November 9th what Elser would admit a week later.)

As I write, no light whatever has been cast on this dark affair. The German Secret Police announced that the culprits were: Georg Elser, the completely unknown individual arrested in Munich; Otto Strasser, the instigator and instrument of 'the British Secret Service'; and the 'British Secret Service' itself, which was described as having given Strasser the order to prepare the bomb explosion and the money for it; two British consular officials serving in Holland, Messrs. Richard Henry Stevens and Sigismund Payne Best, were on the day after the Munich explosion, November 9th, 1939, enticed to the German-Dutch frontier, there kidnapped by Gestapo agents, and held captive. They, Elser and Strasser were announced to be the accused men in a coming Munich Bomb Trial.

As a student of the Reichstag Fire Trial, which ended in a farce, I may draw attention to the extraordinary resemblance between that mock-trial and the Munich

Bomb Trial which the German Government contemplated; whether it will actually be held, remains to be seen. In the Reichstag Fire Trial the half-witted Dutch vagrant, van der Lubbe, was the actual incendiary; in this case another equally obscure individual, Georg Elser, is supposed to have been the actual bomb-layer. In the Reichstag Fire Trail, Ernst Torgler, the German Communist Parliamentary leader, was supposed to be the German instrument of the malignant foreign foe that sought to destroy Germany — International Bolshevism. In this case, Otto Strasser is supposed to be the German instrument of the malignant foreign foe — Britain, bent on the destruction of Germany, and the British Secret Service. In the Reichstag Fire Trial, three Bulgarian Communist exiles, who chanced to be in Berlin at the time and had been earmarked for the part, were put in the dock as the actual, foreign-born representatives of the malignant foreign foe — Bolshevism. In this case, Messrs. Stevens and Best appear as the foreign-born representatives of the malignant foreign foe — Britain.

It is an extraordinary mentality, which runs in a rut. It is cunning up to a point, and childish after that point. Just as Germany, in the murder of Formis, used precisely the same method as in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, so is the same old bogyman fairytale being used for the Munich bomb plot.

I ought to add that I do not believe the Munich Bomb Trial will be held. After the farcical end of the Reichstag Fire Trial, which ordered the beheading of a mental deficient and had to acquit the other four men, because the possibility that world publicity would enable them to play the anti-Nazi trick of proving innocence had been entirely overlooked, no great mock-trial was ever again held in Germany. Instead, the People's Court, with a majority of officers, Storm Troop commanders, and high Secret Police officials among the judges, was formed, and such trials were held in secret, so that the trick of proving innocence could no longer be worked. This was much more satisfactory. I cannot believe, after that experience, that the Germans will again make themselves a laughing stock by staging another such judicial comedy.

But the Munich bomb itself remains a mystery. Otto Strasser has regretfully to deny all knowledge of a bomb which he would probably have liked to plant.

I happen to know, as I was in loose communication with him at the time about the then vague project of this book, that his financial circumstances were desperate; nobody, least of all the British Secret Service, showed any anxiety to relieve them. I know also that he had repeatedly been refused permission to come to England, and though no reason was given, it is most probable that this was withheld in the desire to avoid offending that German Government, and particularly its Führer, whose desire for peace remained until the end the incorrigible illusion of our own leaders. It is another illuminating commentary on our arrangements and our times that such a man should be implacably denied admission to England at a time when undesirables in thousands have been let through, welcomed, and even given preferential treatment over the native-born citizens.

Strasser is himself convinced that the bomb was planted by the Nazis themselves, from the same motive that led them to fire the Reichstag — to give the German people visible proof of the existence and implacable hatred of that malignant foe whom they accused of beginning the war, Britain.

The kidnapping of the two British officials is a very strange affair indeed. In its planning and execution it exactly follows the familiar methods of the Gestapo, as I have shown them in the repeated attempts to capture Strasser and in the killing of Formis. But one aspect of it is most important.

The two men, as our own authorities stated, were enticed to the frontier by the proposal of peace-parleys, put forward in the name of some important personage or group of personages in Germany. This tallies so closely with the devices used to disarm Strasser's suspicions (for instance, the offer of financial and other support in his anti-Hitlerist campaign) that I am convinced it was a Gestapo trick. A second, though less likely possibility, however, is that there *was* a peace offer, of which the Gestapo got wind and which they intercepted. In that case, the point of engrossing interest would be — who was the man in Germany who wanted to talk peace?

But I do not believe in this theory. All the details about former abductions point to my first explanation. In that case, the authorship of the Munich bomb explosion is clear to see. It was the work of the Gestapo, who timed the abduction of the two British officials for the very next day: they were to play the part of culprits.

For Strasser, the clutch of the Gestapo loomed murderously near, again, when the Munich bomb exploded.

He was but a mile or two from the German frontier. War was in progress. The Gestapo had chosen him for the fourth man-in-the-dock, was demanding his extradition. By methods which I cannot yet describe, he succeeded, in this moment of danger, in breaking through the French refusal to have him in France. He obtained permission to go there, and in the twinkling of an eye he put Switzerland behind him and crossed yet another frontier.

He came to Paris, convinced that the end of Hitler's regime was now approaching, that the time for him to return to Germany and build his Fourth Reich was now drawing near. He had a very modest lodging, and few weapons with which to resume the one-man-war and conquer. But, bursting with energy, as ever, he set to work; wrote; negotiated; interviewed and was interviewed; tried to invigorate other men among the exiles in whom he had some faith, to form a German National Council, as a kind of shadow-government for The Day; and even found time to exercise his affections, which he never neglected. As I say, a man of enormous energy and unflagging enthusiasm.

In those circumstances, I met him. He had a crazy Odyssey behind him — well worthy of our Insanity Fair.

CHAPTER 9

NEMESIS IN THE SHADOWS

In the spring of 1939, Otto Strasser, in his Swiss retreat, felt the imminence of the war he had foretold for many years as the inevitable result of Hitler's abandonment of a social policy for a militarist one. For the second time in his life, he felt, the starting-gun was about to sound. The first war found him a young man, burning to be first in the field, then shattered his scheme of things about him and left him floundering in chaos. The second war would find him an exile and outlaw, with a price on his head; but he felt, too, that it would bring him homecoming, and the belated fulfilment of his dreams for Germany.

So he set about, in that spring of 1939, to overhaul his secret organization within Germany as best he could through his headquarters in Copenhagen, to instruct those waiting shadows what they should do and how they should act when war came. The order was 'Clear decks for action'; but the captain was on a distant shore, and the crew were stowaways.

In this book, I have not been able to give more than a hint, here and there, of the kind of man, in Germany, who is pledged to Otto Strasser, but I know some of their names, and I have seen letters from others, and can say that one day, if the enemies of Germany are skilful in their handling of this war, Hitler and his henchmen may receive a most unpleasant shock.

Now the moment has come, I think, to show in these pages how the Black Front worked, when the threat of war came near.

In Great Britain, the public was completely confused until the last moment. Many people felt intuitively, perhaps, that war was coming, but did not understand why or *know* that it would inevitably come. This was because the public was misled or misinformed by those whose duty it is to lead and inform it — the government and the press. One newspaper until the last moment repeated, moron-like, 'There will be no war in which Britain will be involved this year, some time, any time, ever'; to-day it could better prophesy that there will be no peace in which Britain will be involved this year or next, but it does not say that. At least two other newspapers kept up the same lunatic chorus until war actually came. Orgies of ostrichism, of wishbone politics, were celebrated.

This was unnecessary, unpatriotic and mendacious. The men whose business it was to study politics knew, or should have known, long before how events would move. To show this, I am going to quote at length the Order-of-the-day which Otto Strasser, from exile, issued to his Black Front, inside Germany, long before war broke out.

The war began, or began for this country, on September 3rd, 1939, and ever since then the people of this country, misinformed now as they were before it began, have been shaking their heads and saying they couldn't understand this war at all. At the beginning of May 1939, four months before the war began, Otto Strasser issued this order to his men:

'The course of events since March 15th, 1939 [when Prague was invaded] shows clearly that our old forecast, "Hitler means war", is rapidly approaching realization. Important signs, particularly the question of food supplies, suggest that the war will not break out until the late summer; an earlier or later moment is possible, but this is irrelevant to the main development.

'As far as it is possible to foresee the course of such a war, it seems likely to be a defensive war in the West and an offensive one in the East; in other words, it will be waged against England and France only at sea and in the air, but against Poland on land. Contrary to Polish hopes, it may be confidently anticipated that the German attack in the east will be rapidly successful and that the Poles, possibly after heavy fighting and loss of life on both sides, will within six or eight weeks be pushed back behind the line which in the World War for years formed the German Eastern Front, and which probably satisfies the military and political aims of Berlin to-day. The air war, on the other hand, may lead to heavy losses for Germany and a rapid decline in the strength and efficiency of the German air arm, whereas the Western Powers, partly through American help, will be able currently to make good their losses. With the end of the Polish campaign, therefore, the situation of Germany in the air would have changed to the sensible disadvantage of Germany, and this would be of the greatest importance for the further development.'

The last two sentences contain one of Otto Strasser's few miscalculations in this remarkable order. He assumed immediately — as Ribbentrop is said not to have believed — that Britain and France would at once go to the help of Poland, but he further assumed, from that, that they would help Poland in the only way they could — by attacking Germany from the air. This, he foresaw, would cause the German air force heavy losses, and the further development of the war would be affected by such a deterioration in her air position. Actually, Britain and France, though they declared war in support of Poland, delivered no attack at all from the air, and thus the end of the Polish campaign, from which the German air force emerged almost intact, left Germany in a better position, at that stage of the war, than Otto Strasser foresaw.

The order, issued in May, 1939, continues:

'Even if Italy should fight at Germany's side, it may confidently be anticipated that the French and British fleets will quickly secure complete mastery of the Mediterranean. With the collapse of Poland, a new political and military stage in the war will be reached. Hitler will have no more success than Ludendorff had in 1917 in obtaining the hoped-for separate peace, and will, whether he likes it or not, have to prepare for an attack against the West. Whether he try the direct attack on the Maginot Line, or his darling idea of a landing in England, or the indirect form of attack through the northern neutral States, or a combination of these, is unimportant. The decisive thing is that he can no more avoid the attack in the West, after the crushing of Poland (and possibly Rumania) than Ludendorff was able to avoid it after crushing Russia and Rumania, and that this attack is just as certainly doomed to failure.'

I am not sure, as is Strasser, that Hitler will make this great attack in the West. I always gathered, when I was in Germany, that the West Wall was built for a war of this very kind, a war in which Germany had neither been able to find mighty allies nor to separate Britain and France, and the idea was in that event to sit down behind the West Wall, with an intact army and air force, and wait for the Western Powers, if they wished, to come and beat Germany. Rather than attempt that, the Germans thought, they would be inclined sooner or later to make peace, which would leave Germany in possession of that mighty, and intact, army, and ready to start again on new conquests after a breathing space. But perhaps Strasser is right; we soon shall see, if we have not seen by the time this book appears.

His order continues:

'At this moment [namely, between the collapse of Poland and the attack on the West] our task moves from the preparatory to the acute stage: we must overthrow Hitler through a domestic revolution in Germany, in order to save Germany. The whole strategy of our campaign, from the first hour of the war onward, must be ruled by the principle: "Only the rapid overthrow of Hitler can save Germany from partitioning". For only if the German Army is still strong, and capable of carrying on a defensive war for years, will there be a chance that the growing desire to destroy Germany can be thwarted. Our most urgent task is to spread understanding of this fact, by every possible means, in the German army, the National Socialist Party, and the German people.'

Proceeding with his order, Otto Strasser says:

'Our tactics must be governed by circumstances to some extent. The things to aim for are the early formation abroad of a German National Council, composed of men of various political parties "between Fascism and Bolshevism"; the groups of the Black Front in Germany must work with other enemies of the regime towards the common end of its overthrow, and they should also preach this doctrine: "Neither Fascism nor Bolshevism, but the alliance of army, workers and youth".

'Our first task is to overthrow Hitler, probably between the defeat of Poland and his attack against the West. We know that only the possession of a strong army can save us from a second Versailles. But alongside that intact army, our best weapon against an excessive lust for imperialist conquest will be the establishment of a German Socialism. This is essential to our self-preservation in post-Hitler Germany. It is important, too, in relation to the questions of Austria and the Sudetenland. The just solution, advocated by us, of free self-determination in these territories will be favourably influenced in our favour by a reshaping of the economic and political order in Germany. The world will be distrustful of us, and the argument we must use is: "Do not partition Germany and preserve Prussia, as you did before, but partition Prussia and preserve Germany". This would necessarily bring with it the breaking-up of the Prussian administration, the big Prussian estates, and the Prussian army, and also a Federal system in all branches of German life.

'We must be ready to reject an Entente dictate, even if we should by this action be excluded for the time being from power in Germany. The development of the social question in Germany and in other countries would even in that event soon produce a favourable situation for us.'

I have given lengthy quotations from this order, because it was issued so long before the war openly began and shows how clearly Otto Strasser and his followers saw the course of coming events. Men who are so well instructed need to be reckoned with.

For that reason I quote something of another document, not this time an order issued by Otto Strasser to his men, but a report on the situation in Germany made by his followers there and smuggled out to him. In its exact forecast of events, and in some of the other things it says, it is even more remarkable, and excellently well illustrates the interplay, between Strasser in exile and his men in Germany, which was kept up until the outbreak of war and still has not quite stopped.

This document knows nothing of the doubts which at the time — July 28th, 1939, nearly five weeks before the outbreak of war — racked the British press and Britain's representatives on the score of Hitler's intentions. Was he bluffing, or was he not bluffing? Would he seize Danzig, would he not seize Danzig? Would he stop there, would he not stop there? And all the old dreary litany of the years 1933-39.

It says that Hitler's determination to crush and partition Poland by one means or another, 'à la Munich, or by war', is unshakable. 'None who knows him and his policy can have the smallest doubt that he will in 1939 fulfil his solemn undertaking to incorporate Danzig in the Reich. It is quite certain that he will do this — because by this means he can begin the dissolution of Poland, which is an essential condition of his further foreign policy. The Munich method would of course suit him better; but if this should not be possible he is just as ready for the "little war" with Poland as for the "big war" with the Western Powers.'

The document then goes on to give a precise forecast of the course of the Polish campaign — a concentric attack by four German armies, planned to bring about a Polish collapse and to overrun Warsaw within three weeks. This would enable him, after fortifying his new frontier, to transfer the bulk of the German Army to the West. About the summer of 1940, says the author of this document, the inevitable 'great war' would begin with the lightning-like occupation of Rumania and Denmark, as sources of oil and food supplies, and with an attack on Holland.

'The domestic situation in Germany', says the document, 'will first show signs of movement at that point, and may rapidly develop in a manner likely to make it a decisive factor in the further course of the war. It is beyond doubt that the German people will at first support the Hitler regime in a war against Poland. Not only the feeling for Danzig and the antagonism to the Poles are responsible for this, but also the expectation that England will remain neutral. This expectation may be illusory, but it must not be forgotten that the speeches and actions of the Chamberlain Government have nourished such illusions until quite recently. The immediate intervention of England in the war would thus at first only lend new popularity to the old tune of perfidious Albion, though it would unquestionably give the German people a mighty jolt. But this shock would have really deep and lasting effects only if the British and French air fleets should bomb German towns. It is true that a people with good nerves and a good conscience is rather provoked into stubborner resistance than cowed by air attack, but it is equally sure that the effect on a people with exhausted nerves and a bad conscience must sow the seeds of panic. But the German people in 1939 has these exhausted nerves, and in its great majority has also a guilty conscience, because it has had to suppress its better instincts and knowledge for so long from fear of the government's terror. As long as tidings of victory come in, they will cancel out the hatred of the enemies of Hitlerism and the latent panic of the masses. But as soon as it becomes clear that an offensive war against the Western Powers impends, a revolutionary situation will immediately develop in Germany, which can only be aggravated by attempts to repress it. The fate of Hitler and the war, of peace, and of Europe depend on the use that is made of that revolutionary situation in Germany.'

This document, also, like Otto Strasser's order, assumes that the great offensive against the Western Powers must come, and I am doubtful of this. Everything would be much simpler if it would come.

But in all other respects these two documents, written so long before the war, seem to me most apt to this story. They show a revolution in the womb. It may be stillborn or it may be a lusty infant, but the embryo is there, and in these papers you see it. They show how clearly, and with what a small margin of error, these unknown men looked into Hitler's mind, into the future of Germany, and into the war, and made their plans accordingly. That is the way a Black Front works.

This is the way that Nemesis stealthily approaches from the shadows. In the story of Otto Strasser and his Black Front these two documents are vivid illustrations.

CHAPTER 10

FOURTH REICH?

I HAVE told the story of a German, Otto Strasser, as far as he has lived it. It has taken him to penurious exile in Paris, but he has never ceased to struggle and has never counted the cost. His day may dawn soon.

Hitler's day is already closing. He becomes the prey of the historians; in the tranquillity of a later day they will be able soberly to examine him. For us, who still have our lives to live, he is already yesterday's news, though he will plague us a while yet.

He was the destroyer; as Otto Strasser says, his part in our times was a destructive one, and he has accomplished it. He has wrecked the lives and homes of millions and may yet wreck those of millions more.

But his course is nearly run, and for us, who live in these times, the important things are: what men will succeed him; what sort of Germany will follow his Germany; shall we at last be able to live at peace with that Germany; shall we at last be able to plan our future and live for our countries instead of being called on every so often by elderly gentlemen to die for them; and, above all, is there hope that a better social order will come out of this war, that the high hopes with which the 1914 generation went to war can yet be realized; or is the 1939 generation to be a lost generation, too?

The hopes of a better order, as I think, are still not good, unless new men and new ideals arise in the later stages of the war. At its beginnings, men see far less clearly than at the beginning of the last war, what they are fighting for. Mr. Chamberlain, in the course of his weekly statements about the war, has only once said anything that a plain man could bite on, and then he used four words of French: *Il faut en finir.*

That is true; that a man can understand; that is the thing our inner voices tell us; we must have done with this nightmare. But after that Mr. Chamberlain always spoke in English, and said of course we did not want to pull up 'the old frontier posts' (are those planted by Hitler after his four invasions 'old'?), that we did not want 'a vindictive peace', and so on, and in the midst of war we were at appeasement.

The awful danger looms ahead that after this war the process of deterioration in all the standards of truth and justice and humanity will continue further; that it will not be used to wipe out the real evils that grew up between 1933 and 1939 and to resume the onward-and-upward movement that came with the nineteenth century and would probably have continued unchecked but for the lamentable discovery of coal and the invention of the new form of slavery, machine-slavery.

This period of destruction, in which Hitler has played the biggest part yet, has been going on for thirty-five years. In all that time Europe has gone from crisis to crisis and from war to war: Morocco crisis, Tripoli war, Balkan crisis, Balkan wars, a World War which left half Europe in ruins, then revolution, anarchy, inflation, Putsches, and gradually more little wars, the Turco-

Greek war, the Abyssinian war, the Rhineland crisis, the bloodless Austrian, Sudetenland and Prague wars, the Albanian war, the Polish war, and now, again, the big war.

If this continues, we shall have the 'Chinese conditions' in Europe that I wrote about in a memorandum of 1936; a war would come in Europe soon, if it were not prevented, I said, and this war would either end in a quick victory for Germany or in a protracted struggle which would degenerate into a kind of Chinese chaos in Europe.

If we are to survive at all, we *must* get back to a stable and an honourable order in Europe, and we cannot do that without Germany. For this reason, the Germany that will come of this war is, once more and yet again, the key to our own lives. You cannot resume the march towards civilization by barbaric methods, as Hitler proclaimed, and as our many influential old wives, terrified of the Reds with whom he presently linked arms, longed to believe.

And this is the greatest danger, as I think, in this war; that our rulers, though disillusioned about Hitler, will seek to establish in Germany a regime of men as much like themselves as possible, without regard for the longing that exists in men's souls for a better, a juster and a stable order — a longing that in perpetual disappointment leads to desperation and anarchy.

This is the reason why I shiver when I see the figure of Göring advancing upstage. Göring means fire and sword — the Reichstag fire and the present war.

Men who used to think that Hitler was a boon to mankind, or at all events to mankind of their own particular class, are now turning their eyes on Göring. We ought really to have known better about Hitler, they think; was he not a housepainter? Now Göring — ah, that's a man, a sahib. What a pity he was not the Führer! Perhaps he will be yet.

So you read that the Marquess of Londonderry on January 14th, 1940, though he was now convinced of Hitler's 'unbalanced mind', has 'a fairly accurate appreciation of Göring's character'. And this appreciation is that 'Göring is loyal and dependable in a crisis. He is a real German; he could be cruel and ruthless and unscrupulous, but I would sooner deal with Field-Marshal Göring than any German that I have met.'

And so too with Sir Nevile Henderson, whose delusions about Hitler and Hitler's National Socialism ('this great social experiment') persisted long. He did not know Germany well when he became our Ambassador there, a year or two before the invasions began, and took long to learn. 'Göring may be a blackguard,' he said, in January 1940, 'but not a dirty blackguard.' The distinction may seem a fine one to people of simple thought. To subtler minds it contains a great difference. A blackguard is just a man who might murder his fellow-officers and their wives, put thousands of his fellow-countrymen in concentration camps, fire a Reichstag and the like — all black deeds, perhaps, but not dirty. A dirty blackguard is presumably a man who consorts with Bolshevy.

So there we have it, all over again, in the selfsame words. The same illusion; or else, the same wish-to-be-duped. The same danger to this country, to Europe, and to our common future. Göring, the Reichstag fireman, the shoot-to-kill order man, the executioner of General Schleicher, Frau Schleicher, Gregor Strasser and countless other defenceless people; the secret-rearmament wizard; the man who in his first speech after this war began proclaimed that 'if my soldier's heart had its way I would show these *Engländer* that they can be beaten'. He is 'unscrupulous', but also 'loyal and dependable in a crisis'.

Il faut en finir. How? We shall never have done with this thing our livelong day, if this mentality continues to govern England. Göring is as bad for us, for Germany, for Europe as Hitler, or worse. A consolation of mine, as a writer, is that nine months before this war broke out, at Christmas 1938, I wrote for an American paper an article which said that, when it broke out, this Göring racket would soon follow. I kept the typescript by me, and it is becoming, as the Germans say, *aktuell*, or highly topical.

I mention this because I want to say, in time, that any deal with Göring would be disastrous for us. Göring, more than Hitler, has led us to our present pass. He was the man who told Reuter's correspondent in December 1934: 'English anxiety about a threat from the air is senseless, for Germany has not the technical means to attempt an air attack. Of course we have a few experimental machines, but to suggest that we have hundreds of military aeroplanes is ridiculous.' And in that very same month, December 1934, Mr. Baldwin stated: 'It is not the case that Germany is rapidly approaching equality with us. If Germany continues to execute her air programme without acceleration, and if we continue to carry out ours at the present approved rate, we estimate that we shall have in a year's time in Europe a margin — in Europe alone — of nearly 50 per cent'. And just twelve weeks later, on March 12th, 1935, Göring, whose secret air force had in the meantime reached the desired point of superiority, ironically told another British newspaper correspondent: 'German aerial rearmanent is now completed and an independent Air Ministry has been set up under my leadership'. A few days after that, again, Hitler told Sir John Simon and Mr. Anthony Eden that the German air force was as strong as or stronger than the British forces throughout the British Empire.'

To trust this man, who derisively hoodwinked our leaders, to treat with him on the basis that he is loyal and trustworthy, would be to invite disaster. This is only one of the things about Göring that should make any British statesman shy like a startled foal at any idea of a deal with Göring. I recall this particular incident because the Habsburgs and Bourbons show us that some people never learn.

As long as ill-informed or obdurately unseeing men have a word to say in affairs in England, we are likely to lose this war; that is to say, we cannot now, short of some inconceivable blunder, lose it in the field, but we should lose the peace, again.

For this is the position as I write in February 1940:

We cannot — failing that gigantic blunder — lose this war in the field now, because (1) Germany failed to separate us from France, or France from us, and to attack each singly, and (2) because Germany did not find an ally whose military strength, added to her own, would have made a total great enough for the two to attack France and Britain together and overwhelm them both.

The ally with whom she might have done that — and this was the reason why I so dreaded that our leaders would inveterately pursue the ignoble policy miscalled Appeasement until it brought Germany and Bolshevy together — was Soviet Russia. But she needed to do it, if she intended to do it all, immediately at the outbreak of war. A full Nazi-Bolshevist military alliance, a joint offensive with the full strength of those two armies, would still be a terrible danger for us, but at the least we can say that we are, or should be, in a much better position to meet it than we were six months ago.

There are two dangers between which we have to steer. The first is that Germany be crushed so completely and reduced to such exhaustion and chaos that she collapse into Communism, and this danger is remote.

The other, and greater danger is that, dazzled by the prospect of Hitler's *personal* disappearance, and thus of being able to claim that they had 'ended Hitlerism', our rulers should make what, by the three-card-trick method, could be represented as a peace, with somebody in Germany who would be left in possession of an intact German army and air force.

The name of this danger is Göring, and it is a mortal danger. In the Reichstag fire and in the secret-rearmament hoax this man has given proof of the greatest cunning; in the shoot-to-kill order and the mass-murder of people he disliked on June 30th, 1934, he gave the proof of the most complete ruthlessness; his eternal dream is to humble England; and he is quite ready to be bluff and hearty with any influential foreigners he wishes to dupe if bluffness and heartiness will help.

A middle way between these two dangers must be found if we are to be left any hope of peace after this war. A Göring mock-peace would mean more wars; a completely ruined, Communist or anarchic Germany might not mean war, but who wants a heap of ruins in the middle of Europe?

The third way is the best — to support the men in Germany who want to build something new and want peace, and to pave the way for them, somehow, by destroying the German faith in German invincibility and by making Germany feel what Germany has never yet felt — the rigours, within her own walls, of that war which she has carried in the last twenty-five years into the lands of Frenchmen, Britons, Belgians, Spaniards, Czechs, Rumanians, Serbs, Poles and Russians.

This is tremendously difficult now, because of those locust-eaten years, but if we are ever to reach peace in Europe it has to be done.

When this war ends, or perhaps before it ends, when it reaches a certain stage, the men who do not count to-day, whose names are hardly known, will return to their countries — the exiles. That happened in and after the last war. Some of them returned for good, but not for *good*; their works were evil.

Lenin and Trotsky were plague-carriers, sent to Russia by the Germans to promote their war-aims. They did their work, and achieved what seemed impossible; they created in Russia a far worse tyranny than that of the Tsars, which in retrospect to-day looks positively benevolent beside it. Benesh and Masaryk returned to Prague, and put democracy into actual practice; this was the one example in post-war Europe of a State which truly embodied some of the ideals for which the 1914-18 war was fought — by the men who *fought.* It was a great achievement. Pilsudski returned to Warsaw, and was less successful.

But all these men had one thing in common — they were, until they returned from their exile, less known in this country than the obscurest, bottom-of-the-bill music-hall comedian, the last outsider at Epsom, or the second reserve man of the Galashiels second eleven. Yet, they played a big part, and if even Britain's most highly educated men, who live in a state of amazement at the things that happen in Europe, had known anything about them, we need not have come to this war.

Now the time for the return of the exiles is approaching again. This time, the German exiles are most important, for us. That is the main reason why I have written this book about Otto Strasser, and about the Fourth Reich that he would like to build.

What would it mean to us? Could we work with it? Would it leave us in peace? Would it stand for peace? How would it compare with the Göring Reich that threatens us? Would it offer us the hope that reason and justice and humanity and liberty, but not libertinism as in the Germany of 1918-33, would return to Europe?

The answer to this question, What will the next Germany be?, is at once the answer to the question, What will our future be?

Before considering it, Otto Strasser thinks that the outer world should essentially understand a vital factor that it overlooks — what he calls the *deutsche Sehnsucht*, or German yearning, for something that we will call, in order to give it a name in a few syllables, Socialism, although it is not fulfilled by the Socialism of the present-day Labour or Socialist parties in any country, or by the Socialism of Moscow.

This longing, this yearning, this impulse, he says, is ineradicably present in the souls of the great majority of Germans, and the several incidents I have described in previous chapters show the writhings of this soul in its search for it. It is the product of the hope universally born in the minds of humane and simple men, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for a better social order, for a fairer adjustment of their workaday lives and human relationships.

As yet, he says, the groups in power have always diverted this mighty impulse, at the moment when they thought it dangerous to their own especial position or wealth or influence, into the channel of War. The people wanted something, clamorously; then give them something else, to keep their minds occupied.

As this is the background to Otto Strasser's whole political thought and philosophy, and to his plans for a new Germany, it must be understood. It is not difficult to understand. Simply expressed, this was the development.

In the first decade of this century this *deutsche Sehnsucht*, this German longing, first expressed itself openly in the rapid growth of the Socialist Party, a phenomenon only eclipsed in history by the still more rapid growth of the National Socialist Party in 1930-33. 'The Kaiser', says Otto Strasser, 'had a mortal shock when, in 1913, a third of the seats in the Reichstag suddenly filled with Socialists. That was why he made the war of 1914. The people needed to have their thoughts turned to something else, and the only thing that serves that end, in such a moment, is the old device of a war of imperialist conquest.

'Thus the *deutsche Sehnsucht* was disappointed the first time. The Socialists fell into line, voted military credits, cheered the Kaiser. The *Sehnsucht*, the deep-rooted impulse, was left leaderless and bemused, like a flock of shepherdless sheep. In order to forethwart a revolution, the Hohenzollern monarchy made the war of 1914-18.'

The loss of that war reawakened the revolutionary feeling, the *Sehnsucht*. 'But the times were chaotic,' says Strasser, 'and this longing and feeling had a completely chaotic and turbulent character, akin to those of a young man or girl who wants something ardently but does not know what. On all hands were inward despair and disbelief and hopelessness; risings and Putsches; the collapse of confidence; the break-up of the old family order; the licentious exploitation of the young; recurrent financial scandals; the mushroom-like growth of monstrous industrialist concerns, trusts and syndicates; the destruction, through the inflation, of the middle-class and the small manufacturer; anarchist conditions in art; the murder of Ministers.'

But out of this chaos, the old *Sehnsucht*, the longing, gradually reappeared. The masses still did not see clearly the goal they groped for, but the great bulk of the people were revolutionary-minded. They wanted to be rid of all these pestilent things and to be given something new.

Now came Hitler, and gave a single direction to this revolutionary longing and impulse. Immediately, the old problem raised its head. Was this clamant urge, this social *Sehnsucht*, to be satisfied, or was it once again to be blindfolded and nose-led in the direction of War? Was all that pent-up hope and energy to be misused once more for the ends of war, in order to preserve the things which the *Sehnsucht* wished to destroy?

Hitler gave the answer. This, as I have fully shown, was the eternal and unbridgeable gap between him and Otto Strasser. Hitler never admitted what he had done, any more than the Kaiser did, but, after gaining power by promising to fulfil the social *Sehnsucht*, he gave Germany the stone of war.

People who study these things, and try to look with intelligence into the future, should constantly bear in mind that at Hitler's first election, after the Reichstag fire, the last election to give any indication of the political thought of the German people, that of March 5th, 1933, *eighty per cent of the entire electorate* voted for Socialist parties. In a house of 647 seats, 502 were held by parties which had promised the electorate, filled with that social *Sehnsucht*, Socialism: 288 National Socialists, 120 Socialists, 100 Communists. The National Socialists received 17,000,000, the Socialists 7,000,000 and the Communists

5,000,000 votes; all other parties, about 8,000,000 votes between them.

These figures clearly prove the truth of Otto Strasser's statement — that by 1933 the old social *Sehnsucht*, diverted to the outlet of war by the Kaiser in 1913, was far stronger and far more clamant than ever. It is important to understand this, because he believes that Germany is in the course of a revolution, as was England in the sixteenth and France in the eighteenth century, which must come to its consummation, and that the Kaiser, Hitler and the two diversions of the *Sehnsucht* are but incidents in a historical process which is inflexibly going on. The task of Europe now, he says, if Europe is to live, is to contrive, (1) that the *Sehnsucht* should not a third time be used, by Göring or another such man, to bring about war, and (2) to divert it from turning to Communism — and that is where he comes in.

Hitler did just what the Kaiser had done twenty years earlier — he diverted the stream from the social outlet it sought to the outlet of war. Under him, all the mighty energy of the German people was applied to that end, with a ruthlessness and single-mindedness that far outdid the Kaiser's. One of his closest collaborators, General Konstantin Hierl, Commander of the Labour Conscript Army, in his *Foundations of German Military Policy*, put the whole thing in the proverbial nutshell, and opened the nutshell for our benefit, in these words:

'The terribly pressing burden upon our people of being a people without space will have a continually worsening effect upon the lowest and economically weaker strata of the workers and peasants. Sometime, the flame of indignation will flare up from among these strata. Unless we want the revolutionary will to liberation of the lower strata to lead to an explosion, we must transform it into a driving-force for our national liberation.'

There you have the full confirmation of Otto Strasser's words, and the reason for this war. The thoughts of the German people must be turned from that social *Sehnsucht*, which might ensure peace and benefit mankind in general, and clamped on War. In this way the *Sehnsucht*, the revolutionary longing for a better social scheme of things in Germany, was for the second time turned aside and allowed to blow off steam on Spaniards, Poles, Czechs, Britons and Frenchmen.

But, says Otto Strasser, the *Sehnsucht* is still there, stronger than ever after this second three-card-trick. Soon, in the exhaustion and disillusionment of war, it will break out again, more clamant than ever. Are the militarists, the monarchists, then, to be helped back to power again, so that they can keep up this game for ever? Or, failing that, is Germany to be crushed completely, so that the *Sehnsucht* will find its outlet in Communism?

These are the two dangers he sees, and of the two, he thinks the first the greater and worse — because the Germans themselves can avert the second if they are allowed.

The end of the second stage in the German Revolution, the two stages of frustration and misuse, is coming. 'Hitler', says Otto Strasser, 'made it the epoch of destruction and in that sense may have played an essential part. He introduced a medley of half-conceived ideas which he never carried through. The State of Germany was to be organized anew, on the basis of the old German tribal divisions, or *Gaue.* He has never done it. The State divisions remain, with Prussia dominant as ever. The Reich Parliament and the various State Parliaments stand to-day as they stood when he came to power — empty shells, but still they stand, with their Cabinets, Ministers and deputies. The Reichstag, which meets once a year or less to be drilled by Sergeant-Major Göring, who tells the 800 SS men and Yes Yes men when to stand up, when to sit down, and when to go home, is larger than it ever was, and every one of these men draws a large salary. Göring even has a body called the 'Prussian State Council', formed six or seven years ago, the members of which draw the handsome sum of 1,000 marks a month for their services — and have never met! The same thing happened with the Church. The Evangelical and Catholic Churches were to be dethroned in favour of a national church, a German Christian Church, under a Reich Bishop. Some confusion was introduced in the Church at the beginning, and the militant Pastor Niemöller, who protested, was interned; but to-day the position of the two great Churches remains completely unchanged. The State pays large subventions to the one, collects taxes for the other, and has done both an enormous service by appearing to be antagonistic to them, for this has driven masses of people who before Hitler had stopped going to church into those very deserted temples. The same thing happened in every other department of German life. Germany to-day is in the condition of a half-ruined house of which the foundations still stand — the old State divisions, the old Reichstag and State Governments, and capitalism.'

The only things that were completely destroyed were liberty of thought, the organizations of the working-classes, and the hope, that *Sehnsucht*, for a better social order. The only things that were completely effected were rearmament, remilitarization and war. The entire strength of the nation was turned to forging swords, in the interest of armaments makers and those who grow rich through wars, and the war duly came.

'When Hitler goes', says Strasser, 'the period of destruction will come to an end. The *Sehnsucht* will break through for a third time, and this time it must be fulfilled, if Germany and Europe are to find peace.' For this reason, he sees the greatest present danger to Germany and Europe, not in Communism — the old bogy which was used to bring about this war — but in the efforts which are now being made behind the scenes to restore the old, war-obsessed militarism in Germany under some new name.

Strasser sees three possible endings to this war, and thinks the fate of Europe in this century rests upon the choice that is made between these three:

(1) A fight-to-a-finish which would after a long, long time lead to a revolution *from below* in Germany; that is a violent eruption of the old, reawakening *Sehnsucht* among the exhausted and tormented masses and — Soviet Germany. He does not think this likely.

(2) A deal behind-the-scenes between monarchists, leading financiers, and the old ruling-classes generally, led by such people as Göring and Schacht, and men of the same kind in other countries, for the abdication of Hitler, the enthronement of Göring or another of his kind

and possibly the recall of the Hohenzollerns and Habsburgs. This he thinks more likely and fears greatly; in it, he sees the forcible repression of the old social *Sehnsucht* for a third time, the beginning of a new period of great wars, and a continuation of the Gadarene gallop in Europe.

(3) The overthrow of Hitler by men of civic and social conscience *inside* Germany who would not be the instruments of international capitalism, big business, monarchism and the rest. These men he sees in a part of the Army, a part of the National Socialist Party, and a part of the workers; in other words, the men of his own Black Front. This would in effect mean that the development which was broken on January 30th, 1933, when Hitler decided for collaboration with big business and big landownership and against the Schleicher-Strasser-Leipart coalition, would be resumed, the threads picked up and joined together where they were severed, the promise of a German Socialism fulfilled.

He hopes for this ending to the war, in which he sees the fulfilment of the *Sehnsucht*, and the promise of peace. He calls this the revolution *from above*, and when I asked him if he, as a good revolutionary, thought that revolutions could be made from above, he answered: 'In Germany, *only* from above.' I had to admit the truth of this.

These three ways out of the war are worth closer study. The first, Otto Strasser does not take very seriously, because of the detestation of the majority of Germans, who long for their Socialism, of Communism. He sees it only as a possibility of an anarchic but as yet distant future, and thinks that, before that time comes, the men in Germany who think as he thinks will have intervened to prevent it — unless they are tripped up by cosmopolitan intriguers before then.

The second possibility he does take very seriously, and I know enough about what is going on behind the scenes to know that he is right. One of the most depressing thoughts to-day is the thought of that preliminary peace conference which is in progress between all sorts of ancient aristocrats, Jewish politicians, international bankers and moneyed wire-pullers generally; most of them are in Paris, London, and New York, and the spectacle of these people, none of whom will ever hear a shot fired, playing about with the jigsaw puzzle of Europe again, and fitting in the pieces in the way they think best for their own particular rackets, does not augur well.

The time is coming when these groups may achieve the substitution of Göring or some other man for Hitler, and they would then present him to the world, after his previous consent to various plans of their own, as the man to end Hitlerism, the man to avert chaos, possibly as the man to restore Hohenzollernism, and, quite conceivably, as the man to save the world from Bolshevism. The isms would come into their own again, and the old dreary-go-round of regimentation, militarism and war would begin again.

This is the three-card-trick that Otto Strasser most fears. 'To say, "After Hitler, chaos" is nonsense', he says. 'Hitler *was* chaos, and the end of Hitler is an end to chaos. The world is in danger, from fear of the future, of falling back on the past, which it fought the first World War to vanquish — on the Hohenzollerns, the Habsburgs, Göring, the Prussian generals. This is wrong.

The thing to do is boldly to face the future and build something new.'

'For that reason' — continues Otto Strasser — 'I should not propose a return to the past in anything, neither in the colonial question nor in anything else, but offer a constructive plan to build a new order. This war came out of the old war; and Hitler and all the other misery came out of that; so that recourse to the old is no cure, no solution, offers no promise of peace or security or tranquillity. A restoration of 1913 means a restoration of the first World War. At first sight it may seem an alluring idea, because easily-frightened people tend to turn to the devil that they know rather than the devil that they do not know. By means of force — inside Germany the German Army, and outside Germany the Allied armies — it might be possible to set up a new order of this kind in Germany. But it would not satisfy Germany domestically and it would not secure peace in Europe. For the new Kaiser or new ruler would mean a return to 1914, when the social *Sehnsucht* first became acute which now exists in far more acute form; and in order to turn the people's thoughts to other things this new Hohenzollern Germany would, once again, immediately revert to its imperialist policy — a big navy, colonies and all the rest. Similarly with the Habsburgs in South Germany. A Habsburg *cannot* renounce the Habsburg claim to Slovakia, Croatia, Galicia, Trieste, Lemberg. They have to sign on the dotted line in Budapest that they will never renounce these claims. Precisely because they had been installed after a lost or half-lost war, they would energetically defend themselves against the reproach, which their own people would level at them, that they were Kaisers by the grace of London or Paris, and would immediately set about to prove how patriotic and imperialist they were — as they have always done. Any such manœuvre would mean that the legacy of this war would be worse than that of the last. It would defeat the only end worth fighting for — a real pacification of Europe.'

These words of Strasser are true. I have lived long enough in the countries of the Hohenzollern and Habsburg monarchies to know that they are true. Whether anybody in this country can understand their truth, I do not know. I have just read a book in which a professed expert on foreign politics reproaches President Benesh of Czechoslovakia with his stupidity in opposing the restoration of the Austrian monarchy, and as long as Britain has a mighty word to say in the affairs of Europe, but remains at this level of knowledge of them, I cannot see clearly how peace can ever be assured in Europe.

These are Otto Strasser's arguments against a deal, with some man or group of men in Germany, of the kind which may threaten us before long. It might be on the basis of a monarchist restoration, or on that of a common front against Bolshevy, but no good could come of it, only more and more crises, more and more wars, a further deterioration in conditions everywhere. We should find that we had been tricked again.

What, then, is Otto Strasser's own conception of an ending to the war that would be good for Germany and good for Europe?

Quite frankly, and it is difficult for a German to admit this, he does not hope for much at all until Germany feels the pinch of hunger and the rigours of war. But when that stage has been reached, as I said, he believes that Hitler, and not only Hitler but the equally dangerous men around him, can be overthrown by a movement representing Germans in all camps — and his own Black Front alone has its men in *all* camps, save the Communist camp but including the Nazi camp.

The coalition which could have saved Germany and Europe on January 30th, 1933, but for those intrigues of Papen, Göring and the panic-stricken rich men, was one of the Reichswehr, the socially-minded National Socialists and the trade unionist workers; this coalition was represented by the three names, General Schleicher, Gregor Strasser, and Leipart. After eighteen months of Hitlerism, and of public disillusionment, this coalition became a practical possibility again, and was again crushed, this time by killing its leaders, by Göring and his associates. Now, in the midst of war, it is raising its head again; its name now is The Black Front. Its greatest enemy is still Göring — for Hitler is finished.

Otto Strasser believes that this time the sound solution will come true, that this combination of forces in Germany can and will rise to destroy Hitlerism and, at long last, really build a new Germany. But — how well he knows his Germans — to that end these men in Germany need a man over them, a word of command. And to that end again, the German National Council, formed among the exiles, is in his view essential. As yet, he has failed to form it. He is one man alone, he has not the powerful financial backing available to any man who will make himself the tool of interested groups, and these groups, as I said, which have their own especial interests and not those of Europe or Germany at heart, are at present much attracted by the person of Hermann Göring.

The German National Council which Strasser is seeking to form, so that the men in Germany who await the word should have some organized body to look to, ready to give orders and accept responsibility for them when Hitler's house showed signs of cracking, would be formed of men of the type I have so often described in this book, men of his own type, of the type of Gregor Strasser, Rudolf Formis, of the three Reichswehr lieutenants, of the members of the Black Front — men, that is, of patriotic, Christian, and Socialist feeling.

Men whom Otto Strasser would like to enlist in a German National Council, when the war has developed further, are, to quote a few names, Heinrich Brüning, the former German officer and Catholic Chancellor who fought and failed to keep Hitler out; Dr. Hermann Rauschning, Hitler's former President of the Senate in Danzig, a former officer and Conservative politician, who, like Strasser, turned to Hitler and then away from him; Wilhelm Sollmann, one of the few clear heads in the old Reich German Socialist Party; Lieutenant Commander Treviranus, a Conservative politician who was one of Dr. Brüning's chief collaborators. All these are men who have proved three things: their common humanity, their hatred of Hitlerism, and, in peace and war alike, their German patriotism.

Such a group of men, if it could be brought together in a German National Council, would be the keyboard from which the development for the overthrow of Hitler inside Germany could be controlled, when the war has developed further. Its other members, its active instruments, would be the men inside Germany who, like Otto Strasser's Black Front men, wait and long for the formation of such an alternative authority.

At present its formation is delayed, first by the protracted prelude to the war, and secondly by the rivalries and cross-currents among the exiles themselves. For there is, among these exiles, another anti-Hitlerist group which has its eye on the succession — the group consisting of the International Socialists, the Communists, the Jews, and assorted intellectuals. They would prefer the complete, and even annihilating defeat of Germany, her division into two or more pieces, and would not be averse from the chaotic, Soviet Germany. There is a wide gulf between the two groups, but their ideas and interests occasionally interlap and hinder, as yet, the emergence of a clearly-defined German National Council. Moreover, one or two of the men Otto Strasser would like to co-opt may be in two minds about that Göring peace. The prospect of Germany being left in possession of most of Hitler's ill-gotten gains, and also an intact army and air force, under Göring's leadership, can only dazzle any German. Well, he thinks to himself, if the world is as silly as all that, who am I to struggle further?

So that, as matters stand, Otto Strasser has as much to fight against, in exile, as he ever had to fight against in Germany. But if he succeed, what sort of a peace would he work for? This is what he says:

'The immediate evacuation of the Polish and Czechoslovak lands seized by Hitler, with the exception of the Sudetenland and the northern part of the Polish Corridor, as a pledge of goodwill. Then, peace negotiations, a new Vienna Congress. For this conference, the following proposals:

'The non-recognition in principle of all Hitlerist annexations and, in consequence, a referendum in two of the territories seized by him which would not be automatically and immediately evacuated — the Sudetenland and Austria. Direct agreement between Germany and Poland about the Polish Corridor and Danzig. The help of German arms in the reconquest of Eastern Poland from the Bolshevists, in exchange for the retention by Germany of the northern part of the Corridor. A German proposal for the expulsion of the Bolshevists from Finland and the Baltic area, as well as White Russia and the Ukraine, by a German-Polish army, with French and British collaboration in the command. War compensation to Poland and Czechoslovakia. Acknowledgment of Germany's old foreign loans, but not payment of interest; the reduction of the capital sum by yearly payments guaranteed by the leasing of a German tobacco monopoly to an international company.'

Only two of these points need any explanatory comment.

Otto Strasser envisages the immediate rendition, before peace negotiations begin, and as a pledge of good faith, of those territories which Hitler annexed in defiance of his own oft-proclaimed theory of national independence — the Czechoslovak and the Polish lands. That means, the lands inhabited by Czechs, Slovaks and Poles, not those parts of the former Czechoslovak and Polish States which were largely populated by Germans — the Sudetenland and the top part of the miscalled Corridor. To this extent, and also in the case of Austria and Danzig, he thus thinks of retaining something of what Hitler took, against the qualification that a referendum would be held in Austria and the Sudetenland and that the Poles would be helped to regain their eastern possessions in return for allowing Germany to retain the Corridor.

In respect of this last proposal, Otto Strasser was always an uncompromising enemy of any proposal for a war against Bolshevist Russia — as long as Bolshevist Russia remained where she was and kept the peace herself. He believes that by her recent actions she has lost the claim to be regarded as an enemy of aggression, and more particularly that she has come further into Europe than is good for the peace of Europe, and should be pressed back.

I have shown in this chapter how he hopes to see this war ended, and on what foundations he would, if he had the power, set about to build his Fourth Reich. The peace he envisages should appeal to the sensitive feelings of those good people in this country who believed that Germany would never have made this war but for the Versailles Treaty, which they never read; that Germany did not in that Treaty have 'a fair deal'; that Hitler 'had a good case' in wanting slices of adjoining countries; and that after this war there must not be 'a second Versailles' — not that they would read a second Versailles Treaty anyway, but that doesn't matter.

His proposals seem to me to be cleverly put together. Our own Lord Lloyd, head of that British Council which is said paternally to foster our relations with foreign peoples, has in explaining 'The British Case' said that we *are* fighting for the 'independence of nations' but that we are *not* fighting for 'the Versailles frontiers'; that is, we are not fighting for the one thing in the Versailles Treaty worth fighting for. A seeker after the truth might look for a very small needle in several large haystacks with more hope of success than he would have of discovering, from this definition, what is The British Case or what we are fighting for.

But Otto Strasser's proposals would even fit in with Lord Lloyd's definition, which only shows that Otto Strasser is, as I have indicated in this book, a remarkable man, who can not only discover needles in haystacks but even make camels leap gaily through their eyes.

I commend this conception of a European peace to careful study. It would leave Germany still much greater than she was before 1914. It would do the utmost justice, indeed more than justice to the principle of 'the independence of nations' in her own case. It would still leave unanswered the question how, if the rulers of Britain and France were no more resolute in the years after this war than they were after the last one, 'the independence of nations' could be ensured for such small nations as those of the Czechs and Poles, who live on Germany's borders. But then, if our rulers in those years should be no more resolute than in the past, there is no hope of peace anyway, and the peace that comes of this war does not much matter.

But if they should be resolute, then these proposals of Otto Strasser could form the basis of a good peace between the nations, a lasting peace in Europe. That, again, would depend on conditions within the German house itself. What of them? How does Otto Strasser envisage them? How would Germany be constructed and governed? What would his Fourth Reich be?

NOTE

I feel entitled to add a brief comment of my own to Otto Strasser's outline of a good peace for Europe, or at any rate to one point in it. He proposes that German troops should automatically withdraw, before peace negotiations began, from a Little Czechoslovakia and Little Poland, as a token of good faith and practical acknowledgement that all Hitler's annexations were immoral *in principle*. These would leave Germany still in possession of the following territories which Hitler annexed: that part of Western Poland which German propaganda had labelled the Polish Corridor, the Sudeten-German part of Czechoslovakia, Danzig, and Austria. The feeling of the populations in these areas would then be ascertained by plebiscites.

Of these, I would say that, in my view, such a proposal should only be entertained for Danzig. The word 'plebiscite' or 'referendum' exercises a hypnotic effect on that part of the British character which is dignified by the name of 'a sense of fair play'. Actually, there is no such thing as a free plebiscite or referendum in a country occupied by foreign troops, and it is most difficult to ensure one in a country not so occupied. In the case of Austria, I should say, on the strength of my knowledge of that country, that the withdrawal of German troops from it should be as automatic and unconditional as in the case of Czechoslovakia. In the case of Czechoslovakia, the 'national independence' of that country, for which we are said to be fighting, cannot be ensured without possession of the ancient Bohemian frontiers, which include the Sudetenland; without them, the country cannot be defended, and the real infamy of Munich was that it took from the Czechs the possibility of defending themselves against the next attack. Poland, though I do not see that it has a sound claim to the eastern provinces annexed by Soviet Russia, cannot remain independent without its outlet to the sea. In fact, the garrulous ignoramuses who have been shaking their wise old heads in recent years about the wickedness of the Versailles Treaty will find themselves in much trouble when the European map has to be redrawn again — for those frontiers were, and remain, about the best that can be devised in Europe. They were the only good things in the Versailles Treaty, and they were also the most important things in that treaty.

Also, if Germany is left in possession both of a mighty army and of some of Hitler's ill-gotten gains, Germany will also be left with the feeling, once again, that she is the real winner of the war, that war pays her, and that the best policy for her will be to start again, soon, on the chase after world domination. Her next ruler, whether he were Otto Strasser or any other, might be a man of the best will, but he would in such circumstances soon be overthrown again by the warmakers inside Germany, as was Brüning, unless he himself reverted to the policy of militarism and war. In these circumstances, such a peace as that outlined would be wise only if the counterbalancing certainty existed that Germany would immediately be opposed by overwhelming might if she attempted to upset the new treaty — and what hope can any man have of such certainty, after the events of the years 1933 to 1939?

I feel that if I were to expound these proposals of Otto Strasser without comment I might be assumed to endorse them, and that would be the denial of everything I believe and have written about Germany. His proposals would, in effect, leave Germany greater, after two world wars, than she was in 1914. That, in my view, would so convince the Germans of the utility of war, and so steel them in the belief that their destiny is to conquer the world, that the last hope of peace and national freedom in Europe would perish. The destruction of *Prussia* would avail nothing to secure the peace if *Germany* were shown that war pays. If I were Otto Strasser, and were negotiating peace, I should certainly try for a settlement of this kind; but if I were a British negotiator I should not agree to it.

CHAPTER II

'A GERMAN SOCIALISM'

Otto Strasser, a German exile now in his forty-third year, has spent his manhood days, as I have shown, in search of his 'German socialism'. I have gone to great pains to show what sort of a man he is, and shall now try to show what sort of Socialism he seeks, because, in the country where this book is due to appear, many people are spellbound or fascinated by words, and do not trouble to examine the things they describe.

This is particularly the case with the word Socialist. The Island Race, as one of our foremost satirists currently says, is mentally in its fourteenth year, or thereabouts, and the majority of people cannot picture anything other, behind the word Socialist, than an unmoneyed man who wants to take their money from them. Most of them do not even think as far as that. They just hate the word, and do not trouble about its meaning.

Otto Strasser, as this story has shown, had his Socialism partly bequeathed to him and partly bred in him by the world he grew up in. The war developed it: he detested the bullying brutes who put him through his first drills and to the present day retains his loathing of this class of man, whom he sees incorporated in the leaders of the National Socialist regime; but at the same time he took with him from the war an affectionate respect for the Officers' Corps of the old Imperial German Army and a deep sympathy for the doubts and perplexities of his men. He never for a moment saw the hope of his German Socialism in the Communist Party: indeed, he could not, for that Party is an international one and his Socialism is a patriotic Socialism; and he fought to turn the Communists out of his native Bavaria. Then, in search of his German Socialism, he went in turn to the Socialist Party and to the National Socialist Party, and left both in disgust.

He claims for himself the name of a revolutionary Socialist. But in one of his books I noticed that he called himself, just once, a Conservative revolutionary, and I think this name, coupled with the story of his life, actually gives the British reader a better idea of the man he is.

His loathing of those parade-ground tyrants of 1914 is equalled by his deep hatred of officialdom; he sees no merit in dispossessing one class of over-propertied and over-privileged people in order to put an aristocracy of officials in its place, as the Bolshevists have done, as the average Socialist would do. This is to exchange one tyranny for another, without improving the lot of the submerged masses.

He sees no remedy for the social evils of to-day, no hope of social progress, in the simple confiscation of wealth from the wealthy, in making all poor and calling the result, which in practice is one nest-feathering gang in place of another nest-feathering gang, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. On the contrary, that is the negation of Socialism as he understands it.

He sees Socialism in the gradual upraising of the unpropertied masses towards the level of those more fortunate; not in the violent depression of the propertied classes towards the level of the proletariat. Not the enthronement, real or illusory, of the proletariat (which my dictionary describes as 'the lowest class of the community') but the abolition of proletarianism is the aim he fixes his gaze on. To give this lowest class, this submerged mass, the feeling of independence, of co-ownership, of co-responsibility in the State is the ideal he fights for. Not to put a new despot, the Socialist State with its horde of limpet-officials, in the place of the other despots — Kaisers, Hitlers, money-magnates and the like — but to reduce the divisions between all classes is the goal.

Otto Strasser differs from most other aspirants to mould the future of Germany in that he has a detailed plan of his German Socialism, which has been on paper and in print for ten years. It is called *The Structure of German Socialism*, and he has never seriously modified it. This is the plan which, as he says, came to him, complete in all its details, almost vision-like, during a long railway journey between Berlin and Munich. His 'German Socialism' is therefore no nebulous thing, but a political programme which all may study, and if he wins through to power in Germany it will be of the first importance. For this reason, I am going to give a summary of it here.

'Socialism', as it has been put into practice, wholly or in part, in various countries since the war, has, as I imagine, repelled most men who in their hearts long for something, as I do, which this word should represent. The Moscow form of Socialism, which has put the Russian masses under the oppression of an imported alien regime for twenty years and has worsened instead of bettering their lot, is repulsive enough to be disgusting. The Socialist parties in other countries have mostly degenerated into bodies of mutually squabbling professors and trade union leaders whose domestic and foreign policies cannot usually be distinguished from the policies of the Conservative and other parties in these countries. Miss Jennie Lee's book, *Tomorrow is a New Day*, faithfully reproduces the feelings of an undeviating and idealistic mind about the degeneration of such a party, the British Socialist or Labour Party.

But even if such parties as these had untrammelled power to-morrow and Socialized everything, it is most difficult to imagine that any real improvement in social conditions would result. As far as the human mind can foresee, this would again be the regime of taking from those that have, without giving to those who have not, and I am not even sure about the taking from those that have.

In Berlin, predominantly Socialist rule meant chiefly an enormous increase in the Jewish influence in the city and the grant of 'freedom' in the sense of unchecked licence and libertinism; that is, there was unlimited freedom for the exploiters of human misery. A great improvement in social conditions, there was not. The only Socialists, in my experience, who really did anything to improve the lot of the masses, who actually did things which I recognize as Socialist — that is, for the good of the *whole* community — were the Socialists of Vienna, with their magnificent workers' settlements.

I think, after all that I have seen of politics and politicians all over Europe in the last twelve years, I am the last man to develop a facile enthusiasm for the theories or programme of any one politician, old or new.

Rather have I tended, after watching the brewing of this war for so many years, to think that they were all alike, from the politician of the poorest Balkan peasant country to the politician of the wealthiest Western State, men without steadfastness or truth towards their countrymen, and I held them all jointly responsible for the Gadarene gallop. Not one of them but could be convicted out of his own mouth of preaching one thing and doing another. Hardly one of them who, in the moment of crisis, played a man's part. Strange that he who, in such a moment, played the manliest part was one of the poorest politicians, in the tactical sense, of them all — Kurt von Schuschnigg. His bearing on that day makes him a greater man than all the rest.

But I, as compère and commentator, do find Otto Strasser's German Socialism a most stimulating and provoking idea. We do not know yet whether worse tyrannies and greater chaos are to come out of this war, or whether it will at last reopen the way to reason and humanity. It may lead him to power and I commend it to the closest study. I can only give it in outline, and here it is:

Otto Strasser begins his 'German Socialism' with a brief philosophical study of the roots of his thought. He has no theory of a superior race of Nordic supermen; he protests vigorously (in 1930!) against 'the idolatry of race'. He believes the peoples of Europe (from which he excludes Russia) to be a mixture, in varying proportions, of four or five races; this at any rate is the verdict of science.

Out of these racially-mixed groups, all interrelated, landscape, climate and history have made the various 'peoples'. And growing consciousness of their own individuality has made of some of these peoples 'nations'. The World War, says Otto Strasser, fashioned the German people into a nation, the latest of the nations thus to take shape in the area of what we call, with dubious right, 'Western civilization'.

This brief summary shows how different is Otto Strasser's view of the 'family of Europe' (his own expression) from that of Hitler, and how much more akin to the feeling of well-meaning men.

In the history of the Europe that he thus pictures as a community of interrelated nations, Otto Strasser perceives a rhythm of recurrent epochs, epochs of communal or belonging-together feeling, and of individualist or egoist feeling. He sees such epochs recurring every hundred or hundred-and-fifty years, from the Reformation around 1500, to the English Revolution of 1640-49, and the French Revolution of 1789-99.

In each of these Revolutions he sees the recurrent conflict between these two primitive instincts — the instinct of self-preservation, and the instinct of preservation of the species. For him, the first of these is identical with that which we call Liberalism — each man for himself. The second, he identifies with that which he calls Conservatism — each man for the community.

The pendulum of history, he writes, swings continuously to and fro between these ideas of self and species. The

English Revolution, he says, brought the victory of the Conservative, the French Revolution the victory of the Liberal, idea. The epoch of Liberalism, he wrote (in 1930), is inevitably approaching its end, and carrying with it that of Socialism as it was then understood, for the Socialist *Sehnsucht*, or yearning, first manifested itself at a time when the Liberal idea of each-man-for-himself was in its heyday and took so much from Liberalism — for instance, internationalism, the doctrine of the class-struggle and materialism — that it was bound to founder with it. (In 1930, when he wrote this, the forecast was a farsighted one; the disasters suffered by the Socialist Parties in Germany, Austria and Spain subsequently confirmed it.)

Thus Otto Strasser sees a new epoch of the second idea, each man for the community, or the preservation of the species, approaching. Since 1914, he writes, the pendulum of history has been swinging over towards a new era of Conservatism and its associated ideas — Socialism, patriotism and national idealism — and the violent eruption of these ideas in Germany will be the German Revolution.

Starting from these convictions, Otto Strasser sees the approaching end of capitalism, as we have known it, which he identifies with the Liberal era. (The reader must differentiate between his correct use of the terms 'Conservative era' and 'Liberal era' and the current use of these words in relation to two parties in England which seem to have no perceptible difference of principle or policy.)

Capitalism he regards as the child and the economic expression of the Liberal era, and he finds the economic system which existed, in Germany, before the Liberal era to have much in common with his Socialism, just as he finds Socialism, as it has been preached and partly tried in Europe in our time, to be but another form of capitalism — State-capitalism. The armies of unemployed, alone, are proof enough that capitalism has failed, he says. It is the ideal economic expression of 'Liberalism' — of the theory of each-man-for-himself, of the free-fox-in-the-free-henroost, of the democratic exploiter democratically exploiting the democratic exploitees in the name of Liberty. Its motto is 'the sanctity of private property', and the condition of its existence is that four-fifths of the people should have no property. The public mind instinctively feels that a system is immoral and unjust under which the community is divided into exploiters and exploited, and the overwhelming majority of the people dispossessed.

Thus Otto Strasser in his 'German Socialism', in his 'Fourth Reich', would abolish the 'sacred rights of private property' — in his own way.

How would he set about it?

He makes a sharp distinction between what he calls 'Monopoly goods' (that is, the land, coal, other products of the earth, and the means of production) which are only existent in limited quantities; and goods which can be produced without limit. The existence of the people, he writes, is based first and foremost on these monopoly-goods, and the fact that they are in private ownership, and that the owner may do with them what he will, places the population in a relationship of dependence to him which is 'the real curse of capitalism'. He would therefore abolish private ownership of land, or mineral resources and the products of the earth, and of the means of production.

This he calls the main demand, the cornerstone, of his 'German Socialism'. It is, as he emphasizes, identical with the demand of Marxist Socialism, — but his proposal for the further development is entirely different. That is where 'German Socialism' comes in.

His solution is derived from study of German history and the German character. It is not, therefore, an attempt to force an economic theory down the German throat; but an attempt to distil from the German nature and its traditions a practical economic system which suits the German.

The German, says Strasser, carries deep in his soul the *Sehnsucht*, the longing for an independent and creative existence. The lack of all means and all hope of fulfilling that *Sehnsucht* is the very cause of the dissatisfaction and aimlessness which the life of the German of to-day reveals. (This was written in 1930, and since then Hitler has given the German something to think about; but Strasser's whole argument, as I have explained, is that Hitler simply diverted the *Sehnsucht* towards rearmament, militarism and war, and that the hopelessness of winning the war will now soon send it streaming back towards the demand for Socialism.) The German — says Strasser — suffers under the feeling of his indigent existence, his unpropertied lot, the hopelessness of his old age and the dependence of his present.

This ineradicable *Sehnsucht*, writes Strasser, can only be cured by ending his proletarian state, and that is only possible if every German comes to share in 'the sacred right of private property', because this feeling of ownership alone gives that independence of thought, feeling of responsibility and creative energy which allow a man to feel that he is a man.

This brings Otto Strasser to the two first definitions of his German Socialism in relation to property. They seem contradictory at first sight, but are extremely interesting on closer examination.

No German shall in future own as private property land and estate, mineral resources, or the means of production;

Every German shall come to possession of land and estate, mineral resources, and the means of production.

(The distinction between 'ownership', which is a conception without any limits, and 'possession', which signifies an occupancy subject to limits, is important for the further understanding of this cardinal tenet of 'German Socialism'.)

Otto Strasser's solution of this main problem is the introduction of the hereditary fief, or fee. This is his own idea, derived from German history before the Liberal era, and is to my mind a most interesting attempt to devise a system which would retain the merits of the Socialist idea without its chief disadvantages.

'The Nation, that is, the community of Germans' — continues his programme — 'becomes the sole owner of land and estate, mineral resources and means of production, the management of which will be entrusted to individuals according to their ability and merits.'

By this proposal, Otto Strasser aims at finding a reasonable and practical middle-way between the unbridled right of one man to exploit, close, mortgage, or sell abroad, say, a great coalfield or coalmine, of immense value to the community, and the monopolistic, official-ridden Socialist State of the Marxists and Communists. His proposal is, of course, a reversion to a feudal practice, with the State or the community of the nation, in place of the prince or baron.

'To own a thing' — he writes — 'means to be able to do anything you like with it — to sell it, to damage it, to destroy it. To possess it means to administer it, to have its use and enjoyment, to hold it in usufruct, on behalf of another, namely, the "Owner".'

'The Owner will in future be exclusively the community, the Nation. But the Nation, through its outward form, the State, will not itself operate or manage; it will give the land to individuals or groups in *Erblehen* (hereditary fief), to operate.'

Here, then, is the solution which Otto Strasser offers for the age-old problem of the haves and the have-nots, of the wealthy few and the penurious many, of the community and the parasites. I find it extraordinarily interesting, and I believe many men who search for a practical Socialism, but see nothing to attract them either in Marxist or Moscovite Socialism, will also find it worthy of long thought. I particularly like its joining-up with old tradition and with old historical forms.

The abolition of the legal conception of 'the sanctity of private property', and the substitution, in the things vital for the nation, of this system of the hereditary fief, Otto Strasser describes as the foundation stone of his whole 'Structure of German Socialism'. It alone, he says, enables that marriage of private profit and general welfare which fufils the Socialist *Sehnsucht* and does not outrage the laws of human nature. The capitalist system wrote its own death warrant when it made it impossible for the masses to lead their own lives in it, to progress, to come to possessions. The division of all possessions among the community of the nation, whether in individual or in collective holding, is necessary to abolish the evils to which capitalism has led. The system of the hereditary fief, which for centuries was the legal form of the German economic system, alone offers this possibility.

'German Socialism', says Otto Strasser, 'is at one with State Capitalism, to-day miscalled State Socialism, in the demand for the transfer of the entire *rights* of ownership to the community, as represented by the State, but it is passionately opposed to the operation of concerns by the State or its officials, because this would be the opposite of Socialism. It would neither raise the masses from their proletarian state, nor unloose their creative energy, nor give them a feeling of responsibility. On the contrary, it would aggravate all these existent evils, and the workers would have even less rights in relation to their employer — the State — than to the private capitalist. And I know all too well' — he continues — 'the annihilating effect of officialdom upon the individual. I know so well the longing for independence of the German peasant and the middle-class German, and I should regard any reform as disastrous which condemned this striving for independence to be crushed under the steamroller of officialdom. I see the real torment of a proletarian existence in this deficient, or eternally repressed, urge for independence, and hold the most important task to be the creation of this feeling of independence for the worker, not the worsening of the lot of the peasant and middle-class man.'

Moreover, under State Socialism — which, as Otto Strasser correctly points out, is really State Capitalism, one big capitalist in place of the few hundred or thousand who actually rule the countries to-day — the worker has even less rights than under private capitalism (Jewish Bolshevy has clearly proved this), for the State is at once employer and lawmaker. Under private capitalism the State always has to keep up some pretence of impartiality, for the worker is after all a citizen, taxpayer and soldier. This fact, Otto Strasser continues, the revolutionary Marxists try to confute by representing the State as 'the dictatorship of the Proletariat', by pretending that the State is identical with the workers and that there can thus be no antagonism between them. Actually, their system leads to the rule of a new privileged class — officialdom — in place of the old privileged classes — aristocrats, money-barons, tsars, and the like.

This argument of Strasser's is correct. I have seen the thing in practice in Moscow. The working masses there have been driven deeper into the mire of ignorance and oppression than they were before, which is almost incredible and just shows what a Soviet State can do if it tries.

The only class in the land that enjoys privilege and preferment and perquisites and bodily comfort is that of the new tyrants, the officials; the majority of these are Jews, and Jews who not even by the longest stretch of the imagination can be called Russian. They are the equivalents of those recent newcomers to Britain who are already 'one hundred per cent British', whose incomplete knowledge of our language and ineradicable difference from ourselves is shown in the magazines and books they publish and the plays and films they make. Bolshevist Russia offers, I should think, the most astonishing example in history of an alien tyranny introduced into the land by sleight-of-hand and masquerading as something Russian. Even the general who led the unfortunate Russian soldiers in the farcical and calamitous operations against Finland, Stern, was a foreign Jew; he is a poor advertisement for that superior ability which the apologists of anti-Gentilism claim to be the chief attribute of the Jews.

I have tried at some length to make clear Otto Strasser's inveterate hostility, in his conception of 'a German Socialism', to the idea that social evils can be cured, the lot of the peasant and worker bettered, and the general condition of the whole community improved, simply by the creation of some monstrous thing called 'The State', which is supposed to symbolize the liberation and triumph of the submerged masses, but actually is as great a tyrant as any other.

For him, that inflated official-State is just a super-capitalist; and it represents for him the triumph, not of the submerged masses, but of the classes he particularly hates from his parade-ground days — the mean-souled and bullying nitwit dressed in a little brief authority, the ignorant clown who thinks himself a little god because he has the might of the State behind him, is undismissible, and has a pension waiting for him at the end of his service. 'Fascism and Communism alike', says Otto Strasser, 'vie with each other in the glorification of the State, in the repression of economic and individual independence, in the exaggeration of the might and success of organization, decrees, umpteen-year-plans and, particularly, the police!'

So, as the foundation of his German Socialism, Otto Strasser lays down his chief proposals: the cancellation of the dogma of 'the sanctity of private property'; the transfer to the State, as representative of the community of all Germans, of the title of *owner* of the things most precious to the nation — land and estate, mineral resources, and the means of production; and the re-conferment, upon the previous owners, of the hereditary usufruct of their possessions, which they would hold and administer in fee from the State.

A main argument in favour of his plan is that the usufructuaries, though their occupancy is hereditary, would be unable to sell, mortgage, or otherwise alienate their possessions. In this manner, the joint *ownership* of the community would be safeguarded, and the most vital possessions of the nation secured against the secret, sinister and often anti-patriotic operations of big banking, international finance, and stock-market manipulation.

A main aim of Strasser's 'German Socialism' is to promote the back-to-the-land movement in Germany (in England, incidentally, this is an even more urgent need, but no hope of it seems to offer) and to check the process of over-industrialization, the growth of gigantic machine-slave-hives. 'The Liberal-capitalist and Liberal-Marxist ideal of a modern mammoth factory and a maximum output of goods', he writes, 'must give way to the Conservative ideal of a free existence used to the full . . . Conservative thought cannot regard a process as retrograde because it will lead to a certain twilight of the mechanical gods. The time is coming for the German to overthrow the tyranny of the mechanical age, the rule of the machine, and to force mechanics and the machine back to their due part of servant, from which, to his misfortune, they have been freed . . . For the conservative revolutionary, work is but the means to the maintenance of life.' Among other things, Otto Strasser would transfer the capital of Germany from Berlin or any other of the nerve-destroying mammoth settlements of present-day Germany to some such centre of history and tradition as Regensburg or Goslar.

I have explained, as best I can in a brief summary, the basic thought of Otto Strasser's 'German Socialism', which culminates in that stimulating idea of the *Erblehen*, or hereditary fief. Now for the way he would in practice carry it out.

First, agriculture and the land, which are in Germany, and indeed in any sound-thinking State, the bases of all reform.

All land and estate would pass into the *ownership* of the community, represented by the State, and be re-conferred, in hereditary fief, upon men able to work it, at the proposal of local Peasants' Councils. The governing principle of the distribution would be that no man should have more land than he could himself farm or less than is essential for the maintenance of himself and his family and a reasonable surplus.

Here Otto Strasser justifies his claim to be called a revolutionary Socialist, or, perhaps still more, a Conservative revolutionary. For his proposal would mean the confiscation of the great estates and their division among a small peasantry holding them in hereditary fee from the State. In practice, this would affect chiefly the great landlords of Eastern Germany; in the rest of Germany, a deep-rooted, long-standing, sturdy, landowning peasantry already exists, freemen save for debt.

In this proposal Otto Strasser attacks the forces which have led Europe from war to war, which brought Hitler to power, and which have caused the present conflict. He also stakes his own political future, all his hopes, on the turn of a coin. If he were to compromise on *this* issue, as he has always refused to compromise, all roads to power in Germany might quickly and smoothly open to him, when the Nazi regime begins to disintegrate. If he remains uncompromising, the most powerful group in Germany will oppose his appearance in the political scene tooth and nail, with every weapon at its command. But he believes that the German social *Sehnsucht* implacably demands this reform and will never rest until it is finally carried out.

Remember that these Prussian magnates, the great landowning nobility of Eastern Germany, overthrew Chancellor Brüning, the man who might have brought

Germany through to peaceful and prosperous collaboration in the family of Europe, on this very issue. He, too, wished to divide those vast estates, many of them hopelessly insolvent and deeply indebted to the State ('Help for the Farmer!') and to settle ex-service men on them. Indeed, this was but the fulfilment of a promise made by President, and Field Marshal, von Hindenburg to the soldiers he had led back from the World War when he offered himself to them as candidate for the Presidency. But when he became President, those Eastern German squires clubbed together and bought a great Eastern German estate for Hindenburg, who thus became one of themselves. And when Brüning proposed to partition their insolvent estates, they whispered: 'This is rank Bolshevism' to Hindenburg, who turned on Brüning, threw him out, and made Franz von Papen, the scion of heavy industry, Chancellor in his place.

That began the period of political chaos in Germany which ended in Hitler's triumph. But before his triumph another Chancellor, General von Schleicher, again tried to do that very thing, in the hope of rallying around himself enough Germans to rule against Hitler, and to vanquish Hitler. Again the selfsame thing happened. The squires whispered 'Bolshevism' in the ageing President's ear, and out went Schleicher (who was afterwards shot) and in came Hitler.

So that in taking up this gauntlet, Otto Strasser is doing a very daring thing. I explain it at length because it is the key to the understanding of the whole German situation and the test of his sincerity.

Hitler, even before he came to power, had ensured himself the support of those powerful East Elbian squires in a decisive moment by cancelling that item of the original National Socialist programme, the famous Twenty-Five Points, which demanded the confiscation of the big estates. When he came to power he enacted an *Erbhofgesetz*, or Hereditary Farmholding law, which alone, in all his legislation, bore some faint resemblance to his Socialist programme and to Otto Strasser's plans for the reinvigoration of the German countryside. It established a system of inalienable, hereditary ownership among the peasants; but among the peasants this already existed in practice, as far as the present capitalist order allows it to exist. What he did not do was to remove those things which in practice work against the establishment of a sound, prosperous, father-to-son peasantry. He left the capitalist order untouched, so that the peasant remains, not really a freeman, but the slave of the credits he has to raise from some bank or moneylender in the nearest town. He left unchanged the prevailing taxation system, that in its endless complication and onerousness demands cash payments from the peasant which repeatedly plunge him in indebtedness. He left unmitigated the burden of mortgage on farms which are supposed to be free, inalienable and bequeathable. And above all, he protected the great estates and thus destroyed the hopes of the peasant's second and third sons of achieving a peasant independence for themselves.

Thus Otto Strasser puts in the forefront of his programme, of his 'German Socialism', this greatest and most dynamite-laden of reforms. A reform that Hitler promised and jettisoned with every other promise he ever made. A reform that a Conservative and Catholic Chancellor sought to make, so that he is now these many years in exile. A reform that a Prussian General sought to make, so that he is now dead. A reform that the German mind undoubtedly longs for.

As I say, that he should uncompromisingly present it is the test and proof of Otto Strasser’s sincerity. For if he abandoned it, how much financial and political support, how much friendly regard and influential backing he could find — even in his exile.

The peasant, farmer, smallholder, or what you will, who under Otto Strasser’s system would thus hold his land in fee from the State, and bequeath it to a son at his death, would pay to the State one single due — a tithe, payable in cash or kind. In practice, the reform would mean that the vast majority of peasants would remain on their present holdings, for of the 5,096,533 holdings counted in Germany at the 1925 census, only 18,668 came into the category of great estates; they comprised, that is, 200 hectares or more (a hectare is 2½ acres). But these 18,668 landowners held between them nearly a fifth of all German agricultural land. This is the land which would be taken for the creation of new peasant-holdings.

Under this reform, says Otto Strasser, the great bulk of German peasants would thus remain in occupation of their present farms. But they would for the first time become freemen — because the abolition of the legal status of ‘private ownership’, and the substitution for it of the legal status of ‘hereditary fief’ held from the State, would logically and necessarily carry with it the cancellation of mortgages. Land held in fee from the State is of necessity non-mortgageable.

Thus the peasant, freed from the burden of interest-payment, would, though no longer the private owner of his property, for the first time become a freeman, in free enjoyment of it. This liberation of German agriculture from debt, and the impossibility of incurring new debt, is similarly a major piece in the structure of 'German Socialism'. To preserve the creditors from ruin, existing mortgages would be exchanged for non-interest-bearing bonds, paying three-per-cent amortization annually, and these would be financed from the proceeds of the tithe-payments. The dispossessed great landowners would remain in possession of a sufficiently large piece of land, and would also receive compensation from the mortgage-elimination fund.

The process, as Otto Strasser conceives it, would take several years to complete, but he thinks that its practical fulfilment would be relatively simple.

So much for agriculture, the rock on which every well-found and soundly-constructed State must be built. All these ideas would have been described by Hitler, and were so described by him, as the ramblings of an 'intellectual crank', as Marxism, Bolshevism, Liberalism, Democracy, diabolo and whatnot. These are the words with which cheats and halfwits always seek to defeat the strivings of honest men. I leave it to the reader to compare the two men, their ideas, their works, and their lives.

What of industry? That, as Otto Strasser writes, is a very different question, and one which needs quite another solution. Agricultural undertakings rest mainly upon the labour of one man and his kin, industrial undertakings upon the collaboration of the owner and his workers. Agriculture depends upon the land and climatic conditions; industry upon the supply of raw materials and their distribution. The sources of raw-material supply are the German earth itself, for some of them, and imports, for others. In order efficiently to exploit, without plundering, the one, and adequately to obtain the other, Otto Strasser's 'German Socialism' demands an economic and trade policy of the greatest possible self-sufficiency, in Germany, and a foreign trade monopoly, for the supervision of exports and imports, within reasonable limits. By these means the State would gain sufficient influence over the supply of raw materials to safeguard the interests of the nation.

For that reason, the State would be represented, with the other participants, in industrial undertakings. A trinity of interests exists, says Otto Strasser — the interests of the owner, the workers, and the community; none of these has the right to absolute authority — not the owner, as in the capitalist system; nor the State, as in Fascism (though in practice the unchecked rule of the owner continues under that system); nor the workers, as in Communism (though that again is but a pretence, and the real rulers are the State and its officials).

The community, as represented by the State, would, in Otto Strasser's German Socialist Reich, become the *owner* of industrial undertakings, which, like agricultural land, would be held in hereditary fee from it. It would re-confer the undertaking upon the owner, as usufructuary, and, in place of the present-day taxes, receive from the earnings of the undertaking a single payment, assessed from time to time, which would go to cover the expenditure of the State and would have precedence over profits and reserves.

Thus in industry a common-ownership order, equally shared between State, usufructuary and workers, would be introduced. The head of the undertaking would under that order, as now, depend upon his energy and ingenuity for a greater or smaller income. He, the community, and his workers would hold equal shares in the management, capital and profits of the undertaking. From their third-share, the workers would derive a payment, of necessity not very large, additional to their wages; but they would have the feeling of co-ownership and co-responsibility. They would be raised above the status of machine-serving slaves. Otto Strasser writes that this system would, in his opinion, breed a class of responsible industrial leaders, in sharp contrast to the capitalist privateer of to-day, on the one hand; and on the other hand the present mass of dispossessed, propertyless, dependent, to-be-seen-and-not-heard class of wage-bondmen would give way to a class of free workmen, who would enjoy the status of co-ownership and of co-responsibility for the prosperity of the undertaking.

Otto Strasser explains in this way the differences between his 'German Socialism', as it would affect industry, and 'Capitalism' and 'Socialism', in the contemporary understandings of the words, respectively.

It differs from capitalism in that the private *ownership* of the means of production would be abolished, and these could neither be bought nor sold, but only conferred by and acquired from the State in fee; so that great possessions in money or goods, though possible and desirable, could nevertheless not lead to the evils which distinguish capitalism unchecked; the workers and the State would be equal partners with the head or heads of a concern, who would thus not be unfettered 'capitalists' but usufructuaries; the obligation to sound economic methods and consideration for the interests of the entire community would be safeguarded by the two-thirds majority of the State and the workers in relation to the heads of the concern.

But it differs also from Marxist Socialism in that the personal initiative of the leaders of industry would remain, and be limited only by the needs of the entire community; within the limits of the State's economic policy, the competition of individual concerns would remain; the identification of 'the State' with 'industry', or of State-officials with the leadership of industry, would be avoided, and so would the exposure of the workers to arbitrary exploitation by 'the State'.

In industry, as in agriculture, the question arises of the practical fulfilment of these proposals. Their fulfilment depends first and foremost on Otto Strasser, or a man like him, coming to power in Germany, and then on the alteration of the laws governing Germany's economic system — on the abolition, that is, of the legal principle of private ownership unrestricted by any national, social, moral or other considerations whatever.

Once that fence has been taken, Otto Strasser foresees no great difficulty in putting his 'German Socialism' into practice in industry, as in agriculture. 'The simplest method', he writes, 'would be to transform all industrial concerns and great undertakings employing more than a certain number of hands into joint-stock companies; the tripartitioning of the property, its management and profits would then be possible without further difficulty. But these "shares" would be quite different from the shares we know to-day. They would be shares inscribed in the National Register of Property, exclusively in the name of the holder; they would be neither saleable nor mortgageable, in accordance with their nature of property held-in-fee from the State.'

The objection most frequently raised to his proposals for industry is, says Otto Strasser, that under his system new capitalists would arise. But this objection, he answers, overlooks the decisive difference between a capitalist, the unhampered money-privateer, and his potential works-leader, or usufructuary. Above all things, it overlooks the fact that 'Capitalism', which means economic and financial power based on the unrestricted ownership of monopoly-goods, could not reappear, for not even the richest man could buy shares in an undertaking, since these would only be granted-in-fee from the State. He could buy unlimited quantities of those goods which can be produced in unlimited quantities, say toothpaste; but he could not buy those things which only existed in limited quantities, that is, land and estate, mineral resources, and the means of production.

After agriculture and industry, Otto Strasser, in planning the structure of his 'German Socialism', approaches his third main problem — that of the small man, the master craftsman and tradesman. Here again, he finds a new and different problem and offers a new solution.

Under this heading come 'the independent small concerns, which employ relatively few hands — clerks, shop-assistants, workmen, apprentices — and these have fair prospect of becoming masters themselves. These small undertakings differ fundamentally from the great concerns. In the great enterprises, the prosperity of the works, and therewith the wellbeing or illbeing of each individual worker, depends on the collaboration of all; but in the small ones this depends on the personality of the master'.

Thus, in the big undertakings Otto Strasser would, as I have shown, give an equal voice in all decisions to all three parties concerned — the leader or leaders, the workers, and the State — but in the small ones he would leave the management entirely in the hands of the master. 'But', he says, 'in a Socialist system such a degree of personal freedom is possible only if on the other hand the individual is subjected to obligations which safeguard the interests of the whole community.' To this end, Otto Strasser proposes the revival, in a form suitable to our times, of another good and well-proven German institution — the Guilds.

Under Otto Strasser's 'German Socialism', handicraftsmen, or if you will manual workers, traders, and men of the professions, would be organized in Guilds, which would receive from the State certain rights and in return undertake the collection from their members of the sum assessed as the contribution of the Guilds to the State's expenditure. The Guilds would bestow the master's title and the right to practise a calling, craft or profession. They would also decide how many apprentices might be employed, and the like.

'By these means it would be made impossible for any individual ruthlessly to promote his own especial interests or to misuse his economic freedom.' Under this system, says Otto Strasser, the workers in the small concerns would not, like those in the great ones, have a share in the ownership, profit and operation of it. They would thus seem to be put at a disadvantage; but in practice this is not so. As employees and apprentices they would have the certainty that, if they passed the necessary tests, they could themselves become masters.

'The supply of candidates, and their direction through the schools or universities towards the callings where they were most needed, would need to be regulated in accordance with demand and with the interests of the community; but such intervention with freedom of choice as this would entail would be compensated by the fact that assured existences would be available for those who sought them and that this intervention would not be from the State but by these self-governing bodies themselves, who would only themselves be subject to a minimum of supervision by the State.'

(It is a most interesting point, which I think deserves to be recorded here, that in one branch of German professional life the ideas advocated by Otto Strasser already exist in practice, or rather, have never ceased to exist. This is in the profession of the apothecaries. Only the

State can in Germany confer the right to open an apothecary's business, and these cannot be bought, sold, founded, bequeathed or inherited. On the death of a holder, the title reverts to the State, for bestowment upon the next candidate.)

The practical fulfilment of his proposals for the organization of small concerns and of the professions in Guilds, says Otto Strasser, would best be achieved by taking up such threads of the old Guild system as still remain in Germany. Here again he sees reinvigoration for a most important branch of Germany's economic life in the abolition of the fiendishly complicated and onerous burden of taxes as it has taken its satanic shape in our modern life; the Guilds would pay a lump sum to the State, recoverable in one contribution from their members.

The legal principle of unrestricted private ownership, under Otto Strasser's 'German Socialism', would remain intact in respect of house property — with the sole exception that any newly-built property would arise on ground not acquired freehold, but held, as in the other cases, in fee from the State.

I have given a brief, but I believe sufficient, description of Otto Strasser's 'German Socialism', of the economic system he would build in his Fourth Reich, of the just social order which he envisages.

The question follows, what would be the political structure of that State? Would it be a monarchy, a republic, a centralized or a decentralized State? Here again I find much that is of the greatest interest in Otto Strasser's plans. Those who now read his theory of the

State should always bear in mind that it was put on paper ten years ago, and this lends the more importance to the fact that some of its ideas are those which the outbreak of the war, and the uncertainty of our future, have now, ten years later, caused vaguely to take shape and to surge and simmer in the minds of men in many countries:

First, the principles on which Otto Strasser would found the political structure of his German Socialist Fourth Reich. His governing principle, his golden rule, he says — and in this book I have shown how he came to this conviction —, would be at all costs to avoid the demon of officialdom, of an enormous bureaucracy wedged in arm-chairs from which nothing can dislodge it. This is almost an obsession with him, and a healthy obsession.

Secondly, — and this is particularly interesting, as dating from the time of the breach with Hitler — the fullest possible self-government in every branch of German life. Farmers, and not officials, should decide how to milk cows; master-bootmakers, and not officials, should decide how to make boots; master-butchers, and not officials, should decide when to slaughter cattle; doctors, and not officials, should decide what reforms are needed in the medical profession; Saxons, and not Prussian officials, should decide Saxon affairs. (Hitler has imposed a horde of Prussians upon his fellow-Austrians.)

Thirdly, federation. This is the exact opposite of Hitler's theory, which he has put into practice, of centralization, of the merging of all power in the hands of one man, so that his word is law to the uttermost corners of the land, one capital, one parliament, and so on.

Otto Strasser would destroy the last vestiges of this system (his plan, as I say, dates from 1930, long before Hitler built his Third Reich) and build anew, on a federal basis. Local differences of religion, tradition, custom and character are too great in Germany, he says, for this central rule to succeed.

This, as I think, is the most important thing in all Otto Strasser's political thought — at all events, the most important thing for us to-day. At this very moment, statesmen and politicians, plotters and intriguers, are racking their brains to know what sort of Germany should be left after this war — providing, as I say, that it can be decisively won — and how to ensure that it does not again arise in awful militarist guise to destroy us, or try to destroy us.

The first, and vital, condition for that longed-for peace, if I may again interject a word, is that after this war the other countries shall be resolute to crush any new German attempt to alter frontiers by force, and shall not in dithering irresolution sit by and watch her destroy one country after another until the danger becomes so great that they have to rush to arms in a last-minute stampede.

If that resolution does not exist after this war, no conjuring-tricks with words, no appeals to Germany's better conscience, no urging of others to give Germany a Fair Deal, and no new regime in Germany, will preserve the peace. That is the fundamental condition, and without it, no Germany, not Hitler's Germany or Göring's Germany or a Hohenzollern Germany or even a Strasser Germany, can be counted on to keep the peace, for peacemakers would again be outlawed, tortured and killed, as they were by Hitler. Not Germany, but we, shall have the peace in our hands after this war, as we had it in the years 1918 to 1939.

But assuming that this simple truth somehow penetrates the minds of people in this country, and that our policy be shaped accordingly, it is nevertheless of the utmost importance that a Germany should arise after this war which would be led by men who wanted peace and which would see that peace paid better. What sort of Germany should it be?

To-day, men behind the scenes are playing with various ideas. They think vaguely of restoring the two Germanies, the Hohenzollern and the Habsburg Germanies, of putting back in power the Houses which the World War was fought to oust, the princes whose incorrigible imperialist ambitions can never be stilled. Others think of restoring *all* the monarchies, of resurrecting all the 'dear little Germanies' of the dear old nineteenth century, the little Kings of this and that. Very soon, these little Kings would be swallowed up once more by the King of Prussia, and the game would begin all over again.

Otto Strasser's conception of the future structure of Germany is extraordinarily interesting, considered in the light of these problems of to-day. It is as if he had looked ten years ahead and seen that these problems would be racking the world. Hitler's reign in Germany has proved to be nothing more than the triumph of Prussia, once again. His one-man-rule from Berlin is just that, and nothing else. His *Grossdeutschland*, his Greater Germany, is nothing but Great Prussia, with everything else in the Prussian stomach, and a new Prussian war of conquest on its hands.

That is why it is so remarkable that Otto Strasser, ten years ago, should have made the destruction of Prussia the foundation stone of his proposals for the structure of the new German Reich. (It is his main proposal to-day.)

'I know', he wrote, 'that every proposal for the dissolution of the Prussian State is attacked as anti-patriotic, because the creative energy of the Prussian spirit would allegedly disappear. I know too well the great part that Prussia and the Prussian spirit have played in the history of Germany to give way to any anti-Prussian feeling possibly deriving from my Bavarian homeland. But the very study of the German character and German history show that this Prussian solution for Germany's problems was but an emergency-outlet, though this does not diminish the services of Frederick the Great and Bismarck in using it. In the Liberal era the dominance of Prussia alone could form a firm basis for the Reich. But to-day the German people are becoming a nation, and this demands the melting-down of this exclusive, Prussian, little-German spirit and all its manifestations.' It was wrong, he proceeded, to stamp 'made in Prussia' on all Germans alike. The times demanded, not the subordination of all types of German to the one, but the merging of these types, the wedding of the 'Prussian' and the 'Austrian' spirit, so that the real German could be born of them.

This real German, wrote Otto Strasser in prophetic words which command admiration, for he was writing at a time when Hitler was telling Germany that all the world, and especially all Europe, was Germany's relentless enemy, '*will then have that European conscience the lack of which is so sinister in the Prussian product*'.

I have stressed these words because they are of vital importance. Great courage was needed to say them, when they were written; they ran dead counter to the tide that was then flowing in Germany. They show a man who thinks as men of goodwill in other lands think — a man of peace.

For that reason, wrote Otto Strasser, the German Union of the future must not be centrally governed from one place. It must be a uniform Reich, but federally constructed, in *Landschaften* (say, Cantons) formed by breaking-up the arbitrarily-born States of to-day. There would be from twelve to fifteen Cantons, their boundaries drawn according to religious, traditional, historical, and *stammesmässigen* (say, tribal) considerations.

This was a bold proposal in 1930. To-day, it is becoming practical politics. It is the only proposal I have heard that really offers hope of a Germany that after this war would collaborate in the family of Europe. That this new Germany should be inspired by the *will* to peace, depends entirely on the *will* of others to compel her to keep the peace; if that will is lacking, not even Otto Strasser's Germany would keep the peace, because he, or another man like him, would in time be overborne or overthrown by the old, powerful, warmaking groups inside Germany; but given such support from outside, a man like Otto Strasser could make out of Germany a land that *wished* to keep the peace, because the men who wanted peace would come to the top.

His proposal, prophetically inspired as it was, was for the destruction of Prussia. If Prussia remained, bigger than all the other German States put together, Prussia would, he knew, sooner or later impose her sway upon them all, exclude them from the European family, and lead them to war again — and precisely this happened, through the instrumentality of Hitler.

So Otto Strasser would destroy Prussia, and the other dynastically-derived States and Statelets, rub out the memories of princely feuds, and draw the map of Germany again — in Cantons. Of Prussia, nothing would remain but the Brandenburgers, in the historic Mark of Brandenburg — the *Landschaft* or Canton Brandenburg. Bavaria would be partitioned to yield the three tribally-derived Cantons of the Bavarians, Swabians and Franks. Hanover, the Rhineland and Hessen would reappear, as Cantons. Thuringia would become bigger through the incorporation of Erfurt, Saxony through the incorporation of Magdeburg. Swabia would swallow up Württemberg, Baden and the present Bavarian province of Swabia.

In this way the Reich would emerge as a Federation of twelve or fifteen equiponderant Cantons. The old bogy of Prussian domination, of militarism, of war, would disappear — providing always (this is my interjection) that the outer world were resolved to resist any rebirth of that spirit.

This is, in my view, a scheme that does justice to the Germans, and promises hope for Europe, and for my part I would commend it to the most careful study.

How, by whom and by what would this German Federation be ruled and governed?

The principle that the most competent Germans are those who should come to the leadership of the State excludes, says Otto Strasser, a hereditary monarchy. Human experience does not suggest, and human probability denies, that qualities can be bequeathed in such measure that the son of a leader should automatically become the next leader of the people. The system of hereditary rulers is also opposed to the principle that each member of the nation should have the same start in life. A system by which a man is assured the highest office in the State by reason of his birth is contrary to 'German Socialism'. The choice remains between an elected monarchy or a republic. Both have this much in common, that the head of the State is elected, in the first case for life, in the second usually for a limited term.

But such limited periods, writes Otto Strasser, carry with them the danger that the candidate, in order to secure re-election will make concessions to the electorate, and this in turn endangers the principle of impartiality in his office. It may lead to corruption, to cheap vote-catching methods. These dangers disappear if the head of the State be elected for life. This would give him independence of the electorate and enable him to make far-sighted plans, without taking account of the fickleness of public favour.

So Otto Strasser sees at the head of his federalist German Socialist Reich a *Reichspräsident* elected for life. History, again, votes for him; for centuries Germany knew this form of elected rulers. The name — Emperor or President — is a thing of indifference, he says.

Thus the Fourth Reich, as Otto Strasser would build it on a basis of German Socialism, would have a Reich President, a Reich Parliament, and a Reich Federal Council. Each Canton would similarly have a Cantonal President and a Cantonal Parliament, and the Reich Federal Council would be composed of the representatives of the Cantons, preferably the Cantonal Presidents. The Federal Council would elect the Reich President, as the Cardinals the Pope.

All parliaments, Reich and Cantonal, would be elected; not by political parties, however, but by five corporative groups: those of the peasants; the workers; the employees and officials; the employers and tradesmen; and the professions. The workers could only elect a worker, the professional men only one of their own kind, and so on.

Thus it would be impossible for 'the workers' and 'the peasants' to be represented in parliament, as they are in most countries to-day, by university professors, journalists, alien intellectuals and the like conglomeration. No one group would be allowed more than 49 per cent of seats in any parliament, but every group must be represented; this to avoid little local dictatorships of farmers in a predominantly rural district, or of workers in an industrial district. The officials in the Cantons would be natives.

Little more remains for me to say, in this brief summary of Otto Strasser's German Socialism, than to gather up a few loose ends. Under his Cantonal scheme Austria — if at the referendum which he proposes it decided to stay with the Reich — would immediately emerge as a self-governing Austria, called Austria, and administered only by Austrian-born officials.

In the Jewish question, Otto Strasser has the deepest contempt for the methods of Hitler, not only because they are vulgar and repugnant, but because they are stupid; the Jewish question has not been solved, any more than any other question save that of militarism and war, by these methods, and the sum effect of them has in practice been a world-wide publicity campaign in favour of the Jews in which the things they have suffered have been exaggerated and the evils which they promoted have been forgotten.

Gregor Strasser, as I have told, expelled Julius Streicher from the party many years ago; Hitler paid Streicher the most marked honour. Otto Strasser bitterly attacked Streicher's methods, in the newspapers of his Kampfverlag, the independent attitude of which was the main reason for his quarrel and breach with Hitler, years before the Hitlerist triumph; for instance, in an article published in 1928 which was called 'Anti-Semitism is dead; long live the national idea'. In his book on German Socialism, similarly, he attacks the 'idolatry of racialism', and indeed, as I have shown in this book, he regards Hitler's racial doctrines as beneath the contempt of a thinking or educated man.

But then again, these racial babblings of Hitler are no more seriously meant than his anti-Bolshevist ravings or anything else that he ever said; a Jewess, in the meaning of his own anti-Jewish Act, was his intermediary in important international negotiations with foreign politicians. He presented her with his signed portrait, and even gave her a testimonial, through his aide-de-camp, to the effect that she had made the Munich Agreement possible. Hitler's Gestapo, similarly, habitually uses Jewish agents.

Strasser's view on the Jewish question is the view that is coming now to be more and more widely accepted — that the Jews are an alien community, with a fiercely anti-Gentile religion that gives them a concealed inward feeling of antagonism towards the non-Jewish communities among which they live, and anti-Gentile religious laws far more rabid than Hitler's anti-Jewish laws, which are but a pallid inversion of them. That being so, and as they have this inborn, overriding, super-national, international, mutually anti-Gentile allegiance, they cannot claim, as they do claim, the full and unrestricted rights and privileges, and more, of the native-born citizens.

'Plenty of Englishmen, for instance', he says, 'live in Germany, and trade there, and thrive there, but they do not expect to become leaders of the German people, to dominate and even monopolize professions and callings and trades, to obtrude an alien way of thought and way of living upon the Germans through literature and newspapers and the stage and the films. Then why should the Jews feel themselves the victims of discrimination?'

In Otto Strasser's Fourth Reich, therefore, methods of the Streicher kind would immediately cease. He would place such restrictions as the welfare of the whole community demands upon the spread of immoderate Jewish influence in the thought of the country, in the professions, and, through the power of money, in the control of power. His endeavour would be to find, in agreement with the Jews, a means by which they could lead a dignified and worthy existence in the State, subject to the limits which their own religion, ineradicable traits and implacable refusal to be assimilated dictate.

He knows that a limited number of Jews always can be assimilated, or as nearly assimilated as makes no odds, particularly in Germany, a country for which nearly all Jews feel a deep admiration. He knows too that the unassimilable core always remains and in its works is covertly hostile to the people among whom it lives. Otto Strasser, incidentally, has no anti-Jewish feeling; I have remarked this. He has had Jewish friends and in Prague, as I have shown, he had, or thought he had, a Jewish collaborator; this nearly cost him his life, and did cost the life of his best friend. His attitude towards the Jews in his contemplated Fourth Reich, nevertheless, is one of conviction, not of prejudice.

His attitude in this question is a further proof of his sincerity, for his years of exile have been always financially straitened and sometimes penurious, and he could have had all the financial backing a politician could desire if he had modified his views in this particular matter. About that, I too, as a writer, could sing a song.

In all his political philosophy, Otto Strasser has confined himself to the drafting of a 'German Socialism'. He believes, as he is entitled to believe, that he knows what is good for Germany; he does not claim or presume to know what is good for other countries. But he does think that the conception of Federation, which he laid down so long ago for Germany, should ultimately be extended to Europe. To-day, many people are saying and thinking this; he said and thought it ten years ago.

He thinks indeed as a European, and is one of the very few Germans I ever met who do so think.

Many Germans talk as good Europeans, but you need only to put to them a question deftly designed to prick the skin — and immediately that spirit which Otto Strasser calls 'Prussian', which the world calls 'Prussian', peeps out. I did not find this so with Otto Strasser. As I said and repeat, with Germany the only guarantee of peace is for Germany to know that force will recoil upon Germany with even greater force; if that knowledge is not always present in the mind of the German masses, they will sooner or later become again the instruments of the warmakers, and such men as an Otto Strasser will be repeatedly thrust aside. But all his life and works show that here is a good German who is a good European.

I think I have given a true picture of Otto Strasser, of the man, of his struggles, of his fight against Hitler, of his ideals, of his plans for peace, and of the German Socialist Reich which he would set up.

For my part, and there can be few men more wary about the Germans than I am, as my other books have shown, I think that this is a German who, if he could, would work for the welfare both of his country and of Europe — in short, for peace. Whatever the future hold for him, and for us all, I am glad to have known him and to have written this book.

POSTSCRIPT

WITH regret, after a rousing and carousing farewell evening *chez* Perouse, I shook hands with Otto Strasser for the last time, said 'Well, I'll get along and write that book now', and, wishing to clear my head a little before I turned in, I set out to walk home.

The hour was before midnight, yet Paris was an empty shell. The city was not blacked-out, as was my native London; the lighting was just subdued, but the unpeopled streets stretched clearly enough before me in all directions. The night was fine and starry, with an invigorating breeze, and I thought, I may never have a chance to see Paris like this again and so, I wandered about, for some hours, until I was hopelessly lost and wondered how I should ever find my way home, for in those adequately lighted streets not a soul nor a taxi was to be seen. I had begun my wanderings somewhere on the Rive Gauche, I knew that, and had eventually to find my way back to the Avenue de l'Opéra in time to catch a train at eight o'clock in the morning.

However, it suited me very well, and I did not worry. All roads roam to Leeds, I thought, and I roamed. The moon came up, and I had never seen Paris so lovely. What man ever thought to see an unpeopled Paris, beneath the moon? I came upon the Seine, but did not know at which end of it I was, so I took a chance and turned left and after a while I came to the Ile de la Cité, and knew where I was, so that I set forth again along the

Boul' Mich', thinking of Henry Murger, and walked and walked until I came to the Rotonde, which was black and dead, and I wondered whether any good pictures were on the walls there now. Then I came back through the narrow streets of the Quartier to the Seine again, strolled along and said Good-morning to a Zouave, about the only thing in the semblance of a man I had seen for some hours, and crossed the bridge and came presently to the Arc de Triomphe, which had one sandbagged leg and looked gouty. I am all for this sandbagging, I thought: one good thing might come of this war if someone would sandbag the Albert Memorial.

Paris, as I say, was never lovelier to me than in this night, when I walked its streets for hours and barely saw a soul. I could never have imagined a city so still, least of all Paris, which of old never quite went to sleep. Yet two ghosts accompanied me in this nocturnal stroll — the ghosts of Victory and of Peace, both of which I had known, scarcely twenty years before, in this very Paris. I saw the empty streets full of the men I had known, Britishers from the four corners of the earth, down from the line for a respite. I saw myself, spending spellbound days in Paris a few days before that Victory, the first time I ever saw Paris at all. I saw the girl who cheered those days — gosh, how invigorating she was, after four years of war — and her flat in the Avenue de Wagram, and wondered where she was now. I saw the actress who danced on a table at Maxim's. And now all these streets were empty, the lights were low, the tumult and the shouting had long since died, the men-depleted shops were shuttered, the glory of that Victory had long departed, and once again, after only twenty years, the politicians were fearlessly proclaiming that they would not furl the sword or sheath the umbrella.

Hell, I thought, in lonely fury, brimstone and perdition take them all, these well-banqueted fearless ones.

By the time I had found the Place de la Concorde and the Place Vendôme and the Faubourg Sainte Antoine, where the Czechs had a recruiting office, and the Madeleine, Paris was astir again and I could take the breakfast I liked best of all breakfasts, coffee and a crescent, before going to pack.

When I had it before me, I sat back, slowly enjoying it, and thought, 'Well, here I am, in 1939, and here I was, in 1918, and there was a war then and there's a war now, and in between were so many things, lean and hungry days in England, and unemployment in London and map-selling in Wiltshire and nights in Fleet Street, that flows with ink and money, and Berlin and Hindenburg and Brenda Mary and Hitler and Austria and the mountains and the Wienerwald and the Little Rocket and the invasion and Budapest and Belgrade and Moscow and Sofia and Prague and another invasion and homecoming and now the sum has worked out to the same total again — a café in Paris, a cup of coffee and a crescent roll.

In Paris every second woman had put on black. There, you didn't see Lady Deliria This and Lottie That 'doing their bit' in the illustrated weeklies, for which alone, seemingly, they live. You saw no doing-their-bit pictures of nude-revue actresses, wearing earsplitting smiles and a few beads in the first illustration, and in the second putting on clothes, as their sacrifice to the country's need, and going off in a cock-eyed steel-helmet to do duty as Air Raid Wardresses. No picture-papers suggested that this war was a Les Girls war, run entirely for the benefit of the Home Front and of people needing advertisement.

The French have a sense of dignity and congruity. Paris had not the soul-destroying black-out of London, which looks craven but is actually only silly. No civilian carried a gas-mask, and not many soldiers. But every street had its shuttered shops, where the men up to late middle age had been called away overnight.

At the Gare du Nord, where I caught my train, I saw the real black-out, the black-out of the spirit, the weeping women that I had seen, those many years past, all over Europe. Alongside my train was another, filled with French soldiers returning to the front, and until it left they stood on the platform, kissing, embracing, fondling, whispering to their womenfolk, and then the train steamed out and left the black-clad figures alone, waving, on the platform, and then it disappeared and they turned and came back and went out, with blinking eyes, and disappeared too.

Once more, after twenty years. How little has changed. Indeed, only the young men going away to war have changed. Many of the old politicians are the same men now as then. So are the armament lords, and this is more important.

I felt strange to be on a cross-channel steamer, a revolting substitute barge, in wartime, among British soldiers, and not to be of them. I was the only civilian on the boat, save for two ladies of such venerable age that I assumed them to have been entertaining the troops.

On the boat I saw a man I knew but who did not know me. I suppose most people have had this experience. Somewhere, sometime, a man has been pointed out to them and they have learned certain things about him which cause them to look at him with respect or dislike, and then, by chance, they continually see this man, who has no notion that they know him or are watching him, and each time they see him they think of that certain thing they know about him.

This was such a man. I knew of him that he had, long years ago, been a regular officer, in the last war; that for some reason he had retired or been retired from the army after that and had never found himself capable of doing a job of honest work in civilian life; so that he had lived on his wife, a hard-working woman and sometimes took the dog for a walk; but he never failed to remind anyone who would listen that he belonged to a higher caste, that his rank was captain, and that he held himself to be a superior person.

Now I saw this man on board, wearing on his shoulder the three stars which had been his in that other war. I watched him, thinking how glad he must be that another war had come and that he need not take the dog out any more. As I watched, I saw that he chatted, with what seemed to me unusual familiarity, with a sergeant-major.

A little later I sat in the dining-saloon, not far from this sergeant-major, who had a sergeant by him. Suddenly I heard the sergeant say, 'Here he comes', and make a disparaging remark, and from curiosity I looked in that direction. So did the sergeant-major. The man I knew strolled lazily in. The sergeant-major half rose and called ‘Have a drink, sir?’ The man I knew came over, leaned lazily over the sergeant-major’s chair and murmured, just as lazily, ‘Aren’t you getting fearfully broke?’ Apparently he had had a few from the same quarter already. The sergeant-major, a man, as I thought, of the too-knowing, old-soldier type, said jovially, ‘That’s all right, sir, I’ll rub my magic button’, whereon the man I knew murmured again, ‘Then I’ll have a whisky and soda’.

Well, thought I, that’s not so good. But I suppose, I hope anyway, that this was an isolated incident; a leech of this kind can always find somebody to buy him drinks, in war as in peace, and if nobody else is available, why then he will take them from his own sergeant-major, and the contempt of his own men means nothing to him.

I watched this man with interest from my corner of the saloon, for in a small way he represented a type that I detest more than any other — the class that thrives on war. When I was in the British Army you would have needed to go a long way to find such a man as this, and you would, I imagine, need to go just as far to-day; it was the greatest fluke that I happened to run across him on that cross-channel steamer and to see him behaving in a way that showed the things I had heard about him were true. But there he was, anyway, and for him the war meant return to glory, and embroidered gold stars, and drinks at the sergeant-major’s expense.

I contemplated those British soldiers. The last time I had travelled in a cross-channel steamer with men in khaki, homeward bound, had been when the other war was finished. It was night, and moonlight. I stood on an upper deck and thought 'Well, here I am, the war's over and I'm alive and how now?' In the stern of the ship, below me, soldiers — not 'Tommies', I loathe this Tommy-rot — many of them, stood in a group, leaning against the sides, the dark profiles of their faces clearly drawn against the moonlit sea, and sang softly, in harmony:

> Sing us a song of bonny Scotland
> Any old song will do
> Round the old camp fire, a rough and ready choir
> Will join in the chorus too.
> You take the high road, and I'll take the low . . .

Not much of a song, I suppose, and I think hardly any of them were Scotsmen, but we English have no songs left anyway, and have to borrow from the feelings and melodies of the Welsh, Irish and Scots on these occasions. But I have never forgotten the song or the scene. Callow youth, a hard war, and a hard-fought victory lay behind; the uncharted future lay ahead; and this song, softly sung in the moonlight aboard the steamer England-bound, seemed to say everything. It was a song of home and hope, and yet was sad.

Now, twenty years later, I found myself in another such steamer, again among such men, and I studied them closely. They were good-looking soldiers, better, I think, than the men who went that way before them, But they had none of that roistering, short-and-gay, here-to-day-and-gone-to-morrow spirit of those men, who believed, many of them, that a better world would come of their victory. These men were quiet and businesslike. They looked to me as if they were without illusions. Not even the youngest of them, I should imagine, had much hope that their victory would save freedom, or the liberty of small nations, or national independence, or whatnot. They could not believe such things, unless they had grown up deaf and blind to all that happened around them.

But, in contrast to the hundreds of politicians and writers who claimed to tell them every day what they were fighting for and never did, they knew, as I think, what they were fighting for. It is quite simple, indeed, though for some reason none of our politicians has ever said it.

If they had not fought, at that moment, the Germans would have been in London next. We did, by the skin of our teeth, catch a bus that was nearly out of our reach. I think the inner voice of these men told them that, and this enabled them, uncomplaining, to go to a war which should not have been allowed to come. They have already shown that they can fight, if anything, better than their predecessors of twenty years ago. But in them is a seed of scepticism and disbelief, born of that other war and the things that happened after it. These men would be dangerous if they found that this was but another profiteers' war, at the end of which the soldier would again be the least honoured of men.

Leaving the saloon, where the little captain was still drinking with the sergeant-major, while the sergeant-major's comrades looked on with unveiled scorn in their eyes, I went on deck, found the windiest corner I could, and exchanged thoughts with the ragged and slate-coloured sea.

I thought back to that last war and to the high hopes with which the youth of the British Empire went into it, men from all the corners of the earth who were ready to come and fight to make the world a better place. Is that not inspiring, and is it not in gruesome contrast with the eternal humbuggery and word-juggling of the politicians? It is the difference between idealism and tactics, between a patriotic German and Hitler.

Incidentally, what greater dishonour was ever done to the spirit of the nation than the introduction of conscription in England — in Great Britain, if you prefer it. This is the one country in the world where you do not need conscription, where you could at a moment's notice have all the men in the land worth having as volunteers. Some months after the war began a call came for volunteers for the mine-sweepers, and within twenty-four hours, I believe, about twenty-four thousand men volunteered. At that time a German I know said to me, shaking his head in bewilderment, 'That is the thing I can't understand. Germans are patriots, and will immediately rush to die in the cause of patriotism, if they are ordered to; but to volunteer like this? No, that couldn't happen anywhere else.'

What an opportunity was lost, in 1934 and 1935 and 1936 and 1937 and 1938 and even in 1939, to show the world that it may yet believe in an ideal. Why conscript men you can have as volunteers, and then try to slur over the transaction, in that awful jargon of Eton-Balliol-Whitehall-Palestine, by calling them 'militiamen'? Universal military service *is*, socially considered, a just and honourable system, if it be justly and honourably applied, as in Switzerland, for instance. But if you have, by chance, a country where that conception of conscription has never been explained enough for it to be understood, and where the real men of the country are willing to serve at any moment without it, why make them conscripts?

If I had the decision in these things in this country, I would repeal conscription; and I would five minutes later show the world as fine an army as any it can produce, made of volunteers. Not all the politicians, publicity experts and cretinous film producers in the world could think out a better propaganda campaign — unfortunately I have to use the disgusting jargon of our time — than this. But its merits would never occur to them; their minds are too subtle to comprehend anything sincere; and they have not an ideal between them.

Moreover, they prefer conscripts. They do not want free men, who fight in their own birthright; they want morons, who will do what they are told.

Besides, under my scheme those volunteers would have first preferment in the life of the nation in peacetime, and the people who arrange wars would not like that. They never fight, anyway.

Thinking about these things, in that windy corner of the deck, my mind ranged over the years between these two wars, or these two instalments of one war, and turned to Germany.

I had seen this Germany after the World War which she professedly lost. I knew that, within ten years of her ostensible disaster, she was as mighty in trade and commerce as the countries that believed they had vanquished her. She was debt-free, through the conjuring trick of the inflation. After that, she incurred another enormous foreign debt in all the richer countries of the world, and spent the money on improving that handsome and valuable property, Germany. New stations, new power plants and gasworks, new sewage works, and civic improvements of every kind were made with that foreign money, so that, within fifteen years of the disastrous war, the country Germany, as I saw it, was better, house for house, town for town, street for street, park for park, sportsground for sportsground, than any other country I knew save the small, thrifty, diligent and prosperous democracies of Northern Europe and Switzerland.

That money, too, is lost; after this war Germany will not continue to repay it — save in exchange for new loans. But the things it bought remain, and make Germany, as the estate agents say, a first-rate property, with every modern improvement and in a perfect state of upkeep. She, the loser of that war, and as we think the potential loser of this one, has no slums or derelict areas in our understanding of the words. Is the same lunatic process to continue after this war? Then what are the fruits of our victory or victories?

After that period of foreign-paid civic improvement, Germany was left free to devote all her own money and strength to armaments, and in less than twenty years from the catastrophic defeat she was mightier again in arms, on land and in the air, than any country in Europe. By just leaning her weight in this or that direction, she was able to destroy, one after another, every penalty of the peace treaty, to regain all that she had lost and more, without any cost to herself. She was not only mightier than the others in arms, she was greater in territory, less than twenty years after her downfall, than she had ever been.

At that point — put the date of it at August 1939 — she was, as I think, one of the most enviable countries in Europe. The world, which has no conscience, was ready even to forget the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia; ready to look the other way if she annexed Danzig; ready, I think, to do nothing more than deplore and deprecate if she took a small slice of Poland, namely, the slice which she called The Polish Corridor; and ready, as I am pretty sure, to give her colonies in some form.

The world was ready to connive in all that, if she would then rest on her laurels and abstain from further conquest; in other words, if she would leave the Great Powers alone. At that point, I think nothing could have stopped her from becoming the greatest power in the world if she had then changed over, if only for the time being, from the method of armed conquest to the method of commercial, diplomatic and political conquest. That Hitler did not do this, when he had already gained so much and could gain so much more, is to my mind the proof that in his inmost heart he is a traitor to the German people.

And yet, how could the world hope or expect that Germany would do this? The Germans have an inherent passion for soldiering and war, and why should they not? Any German who at that point looked back over the preceding twenty-five years would perforce have said to himself that war paid Germany. Nonsense to say that war settles nothing, war achieves nothing. A German would have seen about him a country that, on balance, had profited even by a defeat commonly described by historians as the greatest in history. Not only that his Reich was greater, his army mightier than before that lost war: but the civic condition of his country was better. Why, then, should his inner voice prompt him, at another decisive moment, to take the path of peace? Even a lost war would not seem to him an all too appalling prospect; while a victorious one would offer the most golden visions of wealth, territorial aggrandizement and glory.

And from all these thoughts, that filled my mind in the cross-channel steamer, arose a fear of the next peace. Assume for a moment that we *can* win through to a peace, in the normal understanding of the word, and that this war does not degenerate, as I thought in 1936 that it would if the unnecessary war were not prevented, into a Chinese chaos of warring generalissimos, local dictators and anarchy. Assume that we can somehow reduce Germany, in spite of the help given her by her confederate Bolshevy, to such straits that a peace can be made. Is that peace too to work out to her advantage a few years later?

This is a great danger, because the same minds still rule England that led her through a fools' paradise to this war. Still the peers and politicians and magnates, as I have shown in this book, continue in the midst of war their Crazy Gang chorus: 'No second Versailles'; 'no vindictive peace'; 'we are not fighting for the frontiers of Versailles'; 'we do not wish to pull up the old frontier posts' and so on and so on and so on.

This country has more than forty million inhabitants, I believe; more than forty million people in it have seemingly been led to believe by these imbecile slogans that the Versailles Treaty, and not the muddle-headedness of our own leaders, led to this war; and more than forty million people in Great Britain, I fancy, have never read the Versailles Treaty and do not know what it contained.

The vociferous group of Pall Mall experts who cried for so long that all would be well if France would only give Germany a Fair Deal, is preparing to renew this cry after a new peace.

Here, again, is a great danger to us. The French are very forbearing with us, but they have not forgotten how the rulers of Britain for nearly twenty years believed, or pretended to believe, that only the implacable malice of France stood in the way of a contented Germany and a pacified Europe. They have not forgotten how, when Germany cast off the mask and stood revealed as the mortal enemy, not of France, but of Britain, France was calmly expected to hold the Maginot Line until Britain should have changed out of golf clothes and made ready.

The Frenchmen I met, when I was in Paris, were all prepared to go through with this war, but looked with the greatest foreboding to the peace. They all asked me 'Will you be at our side in peace, or will that wrangle begin all over again? Shall we become the scapegoat of your politicians again? Will you nag at us to be nice to Germany until Germany begins another war — and then look to us to hold the Maginot Line until you come along some time later?' I found these men full of misgiving, and this is a perilous thing for us, because, as I write, the war has hardly begun, but French peasants have been for six months standing idly in the Maginot Line and worrying about their farms, French shopkeepers have been standing alongside them for as long and worrying about their shops, and this is a demoralizing business, and all the while German propaganda whispers into their ears that Germany has not the least wish to fight France, only to be done once and for all with these intolerable *Engländer*. So if there is any man in England who can induce a politician to listen to him, and to read a book or two about Europe, and try to learn something about France and Germany, I hope he will get to work and leave that politician no rest until he has come to understand a little about these things.

These cries, which so worry the French, of 'no second Versailles' and 'no vindictive peace' are seemingly the expressions of that peculiarly British form of Christianity which, hoping to be forgiven its own trespasses, is ready to forgive the trespasses of Germany against Poles and Czechs.

The League of Nations was the golden vision that was held before the people of Britain after the last war. This time it is to be called 'Federal Union'. Another slogan, another disillusionment-in-store, unless the will-to-prevent war is there; words won't stop it.

When this war loomed menacingly ahead, our rulers began to cry that 'The League of Nations' had failed. This is as if the managing director of some great concern were to attribute its bankruptcy to the shortcomings of his lady stenographer. France and Britain held about seventy per cent of the capital in that concern, and had its success or failure in their hands; it failed through their management, and to pretend that the crash was due to the conduct of such small shareholders as Iceland, Costa Rica, Haiti, or Bulgaria is ludicrous.

The League of Nations was a sound idea, if the leading shareholders were prepared to fulfil their duty to it. That duty was to lead the whole body of shareholders in implacable armed resistance to a peacebreaker. If the resolution to fulfil that duty exists, Federal Union can be made a success, but so could the League of Nations have been a success. If the intention is not there, the one slogan is as empty, the one institution as bankrupt at birth, as the other. The change of name will of itself accomplish nothing; and a very sinister gang may be hiding behind this new slogan of 'Federal Union'.

This is the vital issue, always slurred over beneath fine phrases, to which all thought about the future of Europe invariably returns. This is the reason why all these insidious whispers about 'Göring is a moderate', 'we are not making war on the German people', and 'no second Versailles' show that the next peace, if we can win through to one, may be more dangerous to us even than this war.

At the root of them lies that appalling class-and-caste feeling in Britain which is the real cause of our troubles. The awful fear that the idea of social progress might revive in Europe and in this country, that they might one day have one million pounds instead of two, leads influential people in this country to rack their brains for a way to inflict the appearance of defeat on Germany while preserving intact in that country the regime of its real rulers — the magnates and armaments-monarchs who before 1914 nose-led it through Kaiser Wilhelm and in 1933 put Hitler into power.

What sort of people these are, you may see from the case of Krupps. Krupps are foremost among the big-business, big-battalion and big-battle group which put Hitler into power on January 30th, 1933, the day when he openly bade farewell to his social and Socialist promises and became the Chancellor of heavy industry and big landlordry. During the present war, Krupps have been supplying artillery to the Dutch army. If Hitler should invade that country, his soldiers will be killed by German shells. Thus Krupps have no cause to fear overmuch about the result of the war.

The two-mindedness of our rulers, which was a chief cause for the dreary approach and outbreak of the war, may lead to the loss of another peace. Their attitude to their own people, not to the German people, is the real reason for our plight and for the indecision, the uncertainty, the bewilderment about the things-we-are-fighting-for, that plague us and obscure our future. They need to open their minds to the inevitability of social reinvigoration in England, and then they will no longer be in two minds about the peace they would make with Germany. 'We've got to be prepared' said, in execrable English, a bedraggled and rainstained banner at Marble

Arch when the war approached. But that is not all. In England, we've got to be repaired.

History, destiny or what you will, played a grim joke on mankind when it invented the machine. Until that time, the development of mankind, at any rate during the centuries of our civilization, as we call it, had been an upward one.

Slowly, slowly, the belief in the dignity of man gained ground, and the dogma that his lot was to be the bondslave of a few lost ground. The claim that he was entitled to be a freeman gained an acceptance which spread and spread until it was on the point of gaining universal acceptance; the opposing theory, that he was born to be the serf of others who were born richer, a landless slave without rights either for himself or his daughters, approached universal rejection. Even some princes and aristocrats saw this; from their ranks came some of the most enlightened men, such as Ludwig I of Bavaria and Kossuth of Hungary.

The liberation of the peasants, the men who farmed the land and were thus the most valuable citizens of the state, gradually came to be a development recognized as inevitable, opposed only in islands of feudalism here and there which grew progressively smaller. The World War continued this development in Bohemia and Poland.

But at that very moment, when mankind seemed to be engaged in an upward march that was slow but yet perceptible enough to satisfy the minds of enlightened men, came the machine, the factory, the coalmine, and brought with them a new age of obdurate privilegeholders, entrenched in money, and a new race of landless serfs without rights — the machine-slaves. The millionaire, the magnate, the managing director, the mass-production monarch, succeeded, by right of wealth, to the barons and the princes. The old, age-long struggle has been resumed in another form.

This is the underlying struggle that explains all our wars, that confuses their issues, and leads to the recurrent bamboozling of the masses. They do not see clearly what is afoot. Their leaders, adept in the art of drilling them, feed them on phrases that satisfy their inarticulate longing for progress, but actually they do not move forward; of low intelligence, they think they march while they actually mark time.

Some men, and I think I am of them, see and regret this three-card-trick. This is what Captain Liddell Hart said in *The Defence of Britain*:

'The longer I have watched events, from a close-up view, the more I have come to the conclusion that most of our mistakes, and troubles, are not due to natural faults of judgment. But that the real cause lies in the habit — on all sides — of saying something less, or something more, than we know to be true. This almost universal practice of distorting simple matters of fact, whether by suppression or exaggeration, is inspired by concern for the interests of party, class, or profession — at bottom this so-called loyalty being too often self-interest. We are intent on "making a case" rather than on finding the truth. We play the part of counsel for the defence or for the prosecution. It is easier, and more popular, than the laborious effort of becoming scientific investigators.

The results, as I have observed them in the sphere of governments and of public administration, are an endless chain of decisions taken in avoidable ignorance and of judgments marred by prejudice. The highest attainment of freedom is freedom from prejudice . . . Truth may be hard to attain, as we all know; but the best chance of attaining it lies in consistent care to avoid untruth. That is a lesson that mankind has been slow to learn. Yet it is engraved on the whole course of history.'

This, as I think, expresses the truth of our recent history. We are being too clever, our rulers have found that the masses are too easy to delude. Thus we always hear a noble name for a shady transaction. 'Non-intervention' sounded fine; the thing that bore this name was in fact intervention in favour of the side which appealed to the ruling classes in this country. Munich was 'a heroic effort to preserve the peace', and is to this very day. But was it heroic for Britain — for Britain, of all countries in this world — to send an ultimatum to a small State, expiring 'at twelve o'clock to-day', that demanded its surrender to a mighty neighbouring power?

Here is the eternal distortion of simple matters inspired by concern for the interests of party, class or profession. 'We were not ready to fight for Czechoslovakia' — yes, no one would quarrel with that. 'Our military preparations were not far enough advanced for us to enter a conflict at that moment on this issue' — none would quarrel with that. 'We believed that if Germany were enabled, at the cost of the independence of a small state, to expand in an eastward direction, she would come into conflict with Soviet Russia and we ourselves should be spared a war which we wish to avoid' — well, even that would command respect. But, 'a heroic effort to preserve the peace'? This is the kind of phrase that makes the seeker after truth, the seeker after better times, retch.

To-day, it is said often enough that the proof of Britain's democracy, of the freedom of speech in Britain, is given by the liberty which writers still have to say such things as I have said in this book — things which seem to me so obvious that they should be above controversy. Perhaps that *is* a sign that something sturdy and ineradicable remains of the British spirit.

Yet I am not sure of it. I think rather that the rulers of Britain feel so sure of themselves, are so firmly dug-in, have so little respect for the intelligence of the masses, such complete faith in their ability to find a three-card-trick for every emergency, that they do not very much care about anything that is said or written. The House is packed with hundreds of Members of such indomitable compliancy that they will, on Monday, pledge themselves to support the Government to their last breaths in its inflexible determination not to introduce conscription, and, a week later, cheer to the same echo the same Government's announcement of its decision to introduce conscription.

This happened!

It is a great danger for us that the lordly ones, those in high places behind the scenes who so incorrigibly pinned their faith to Adolf (Save-us-from-Bolshevism) Hitler, even now have so much to say in our affairs. Lately I heard the man they call Lord Haw-Haw, Mahomet knows why, quoting some of the things that Lord Lothian wrote and said three years ago. I hoped they had been forgotten, but no, they had been stored up in a Nazi card-index, and now, out they came, and strange sounds they made, in 1940. Lord Lothian is now our Ambassador in Washington.

For such reasons, I fear the peace, if we can win through to a peace — that is, some arrangement reached at a conference table after Germany has intimated that she does not wish to continue the war. And with such thoughts in my mind, I contemplated the homecoming soldiers in that cross-channel steamer and saw, among them, the shadows of the men who came that way twenty years earlier, their hearts glad with victory and big with hope for the world that heroes were to live in.

When I reached London, I stepped out into the black-out, and felt as if I had been plunged to my scalp in a bottle of ink. A terrible thing, this London black-out, and, as I believe, unnecessary, for my experience in the air tells me that nothing but a thick fog could hide London, with the broad silver ribbon of the Thames leading to it, from the eyes of enemy airmen, once they reached it. You cannot hide London from them, if they come. But you *can* fight them off.

I believe the best means of bewildering raiding airmen would be to floodlight London and its near countryside as brilliantly as possible; then they would have beneath them a dead-white and ghostly picture in which they would be unable to distinguish anything at all.

In the London I returned to, Mr. Chamberlain was speaking at the Mansion House about the dangers of an unbridled rise in wages. I suppose the world-famed British sense of humour causes a British Prime Minister, a rich man himself, to choose as his audience an assembly of other rich men, and as his platform the Mansion House, with its sanctified odour of tradition and turtle-soup, when he wishes to tell the workers not to strive after higher wages. Crumbs from the rich man's table!

Mr. Chamberlain, inevitably, said that 'a vicious spiral' would result if wages, crying 'Excelsior', set out on that hazardous climb after prices. I think all young boys and girls on the threshold of life and its perils should be acquainted by prudent parents with this excellent definition of the word 'vice'. When prices rise, that is a virtuous perpendicular movement. When wages follow them, that is a vicious spiral.

In that England that I found again, a fox-hunter had written to a fox-hunting magazine from his lines in France to complain that the French had refused him permission to hunt foxes across their fields. He evidently felt that they did not take the war seriously. But when he asked them why, they answered, of all things, that they took this war seriously, because it was for their country. How perfectly we love and understand one another, the French and British. My hotel in Paris had advertised a Scots speciality, 'Wels Rarebit'. One of the first British propaganda films, prepared to impress our allies and the remaining world with our might in arms, had just been released in Paris; it began with Crecy and Agincourt.

Ah well!

We are in the roaring 'forties, the fourth decade of the twentieth century, the year 1940, and the future lies more turbulent than ever before the generation, the children of the storm, cradled when the eighteen-hundreds were dying. The war-to-end-war never even ended itself; it has now been resumed. This instalment of it, as I write, has not passed out of the war-to-begin-war stage; it will not grow up.

What kind of a war is it? For freedom? Freedom dwindles every day; though licence grows; in the free henroosts of mass-regimentation, ever more impregnably enclosed, the free foxes of mass-exploitation revel in their increasing liberty.

Is it a war to end 'Hitlerism', to begin Göringism? Is it worth while sacrificing millions of men, in the roaring 'twenties, to take 'ism' off 'Kaiser' and 'Despot', only to allow 'ism' to grow on to 'Hitler' twenty years later; and in the roaring 'forties to sacrifice more millions so that the 'ism' may be transferred from 'Hitler' to 'Göring' or to 'Hohenzollern' again?

Is it a war for The Survival Of The Richest? A gentleman's, or Gentile-man's war, to enthrone the gentle anti-Gentiles? What on Jupiter is it? The man in the moon knows; we do not — yet.

For many centuries Europe moved, slowly but perceptibly, onward and upward towards the ideals of humanity and justice. During the first forty years of this century, Europe has moved steadily backward. Slavery, mass-regimentation and mass-exploitation, injustice, have returned, always masquerading under noble names, chief among them 'Patriotism' and 'Nationalism'; but the parasites, the exploiters, the anti-patriots, the slavedrivers, the murderers of souls, also misused the rise of 'Liberalism', 'Humanity' and 'Justice' for their own ends and contributed to the process of deterioration. 'What, you would persecute me because I keep a sweatshop or a brothel? What freedom, what justice, what equality is this?'

This war will show, at last, whether the slow progress towards noble ideals which many men, consciously or unwittingly, strive and long for in their souls, can be resumed in Europe; or whether it is itself but a part of the process of degeneration in standards of thought, of living and of behaviour which has uninterruptedly continued for forty years past.

Of freedom, so little now remains that the placards proclaiming the word seem like jests uttered at a grave. Before the 1914 war, a man could put on his hat and take a ship to the ends of the earth, without even a visiting card. Before this war, he needed passports, visas, currency permits, and a whole pocketful of authorizations, recommendations, permissions and what you will. Now, in the countries at war, he cannot leave at all, save he overcome enormous difficulties. He may not send a penny piece abroad without surmounting the same array of obstacles. In one country he cannot obtain tea or coffee; in another, butter; in a third, meat. This is at the beginning of a war to preserve freedom. What will the state of affairs be at its end?

This war had to come — because it was not prevented in time. When it came, we bought it at the top of the market, which is bad business in the commodity war, as in all else. Victory could have been had cheaply on one occasion. On three subsequent occasions, it could have been had, less cheaply, but at a reasonable price. Victory — in the Waterloo sense — is now, I think, unpurchasable; but nevertheless, we must pay the price of it.

For the simple commercial reasons I have stated, I watched the approach of this war with feelings of ever-deepening foreboding. For one thing, I was closer to it than most, and my feelings were those of a man who shouts to another man to jump out of the way of the motor lorry which is about to demolish him, only to be rebuked by the cold stare of one who does not care to be addressed by persons to whom he has not been introduced.

When the war came, I experienced, for the first time for many years, a glorious sensation — the rebirth of hope. The foul and unnecessary war had come, but after a few weeks I saw the death of my greatest fear — that we should lose. I still could not see how we could win — but we could no longer lose, and that was much gained.

The reasons were that Hitler's marriage with Moscow, which was clear to foresee and duly came, was not consummated; that the full, two-armies-that-strike-as-one military alliance was not made.

To marry the lady with the scarlet letter on her brow and yet not harvest the nuptial delights? Not the marriage, but the abstention from the marriage bed was the unexpected and inexplicable thing. Hitler seemed to be carrying his vows of abstinence to the point of absurdity. Only an autopsy or his own disclosures can ever explain this farcical denouement.

But it was good enough to me and, jubilant but scarcely daring to believe my eyes, I watched, in the first weeks of the war, the possibility of our defeat vanish.

Many other reassuring things came crowding on the heels of those glad tidings. Firstly, the quality of our Air Force and Navy. I had feared that these would have been infected by the political senility which allowed the country to drift into this war, but I was wrong. The men who had charge of the Services, at all events, had never forgotten their task and their duty, which was to keep Britain's defences strong and efficient.

I knew, from my years in Germany, the great hopes that the Germans reposed in the starve-out, and this was a major, though a secondary, danger for us. The Germans always believed that they brought us to the verge of starvation in 1917 by unbridled submarine warfare, and that we were only saved from it by American intervention. They hoped to reach that end this time by extending the same type of warfare; the four weapons they had were the submarine, the mine, the aeroplane, and the ocean-going raider.

I began to exult when I studied the young Naval and Air Force officers and men I saw about. I had a good standard of comparison — 1914-18 — and soon saw that they were better than their predecessors of that day. They were, indeed, as good as they could be, and the way the Navy quietly but tenaciously mastered the submarines, and then began to master the mines, and the Air Force fought off the German raiders when they tried to bomb the fleet at anchor made me feel that I was being reborn.

But to be reborn is one thing, and to regain your birthright is another. I felt that I had regained mine, which with many other Britishers I felt I had lost at Munich, on the day the *Graf Spee* ran for Montevideo harbour.

I had seen this ship, in Germany, and talked to the officer who eventually scuttled her. I saw her sister-ship, the *Deutschland*, launched. I knew that all Germans put some of their greatest hopes for the humbling of Britain in these ships. I knew that they had been especially designed and built for the starve-out. They were designed to make the quick kill and quick getaway. They were armed to outgun ships that could catch them; they were given speed to outrun ships that could destroy them.

By all paper calculations, they should have done enormous damage. The French and British navies, together, had only four ships which, on paper, could both catch them and outgun them. In the Great War the raider *Wolf* cruised the seven seas for fifteen months, sank 135,000 tons of Allied shipping, laid hundreds of mines — and she was but a 6000-ton passenger steamer of 11 knots, armed with 5.9 inch guns. The pocket-battleships, especially built for their task, could steam at 26 knots, had 11 inch guns. How could they be found; when found, how could they be overtaken; when overtaken, how could they be destroyed? Germans confidently foretold that they would sink a million tons of shipping each.

Yet those British ships caught, fought and vanquished the *Graf Spee*. The last dreams of the starve-out faded. Italy, if she ever thought of taking Germany's side, probably changed her mind that day. Of this magnificent exploit can it be said, more truly than it was said on another occasion in the last war, that 'Nelson came again'.

The men of our Air Force and Navy showed, what I had begun to doubt before the war, that the spirit of the British people stood as high as ever. They had this advantage — that from the word go they knew exactly what their job was, to fight Britain's enemies. That is a thing a man can understand; there is no ambiguity about it. The contrast remained, between this valiancy and clarity, and the mists that shrouded everything as soon as the gaze was shifted from Montevideo to Westminster.

What was the war about? Why was the trustworthy statesman of yesterday suddenly become the perjured villain of to-day, after only one more fib? Would to-day's enemy become the friend of to-morrow? Whither *were* we going?

I could never forget this contrast between the fighting-men of Britain and the politicians, never understand why men of their type could not win through to the control of civic affairs. Would this generation, too, be elbowed aside after this war, I wondered. In the Government, as a member stated in the House, only two Ministers of military age went off to the war they had undertaken. To me, it was incongruous that such a nation should be led by elderly gentlemen who took umbrellas to go flying in closed aeroplanes. The new Ministries, Institutes, Councils and whatnot, too, were filling up, once more, with the children of influence, with alien-born 'specialists' and other limpets. These two scenes did not attune. The repugnant old profiteer-and-soft-job racket of 1914-1918 was beginning again.

Two other sunbeams fell on me out of a sky still overcast. The first was the response of the Empire, which, I think, surprised many people who had consistently had less forebodings than I. I suppose only men who knew France in 1914 and 1915 can understand the feelings with which I saw the Australians, Canadians, South Africans and New Zealanders of 1939. They, too, were better than ever. The exalting effect of their appearance was like that of champagne.

The other inspiring thing was that we did not make the one mistake that could have lost the war. The ghosts of Passchendaele and the Somme, where millions of Britishers were thrown without rhyme or reason or hope of victory against impregnable German fortifications, still prowled about the West Wall. I had a nightmarish apprehension that the longing of Wall Street for 'action' or 'a token of good faith', or the obsession of some textbook-bred commander, would lead to this. No man can say how we can *win* this war; but we could certainly *lose* it like that. It has not happened, praise be. If I did not, of all communities of men, most detest the Lettuce Brotherhood ('Lettuce hope that . . .'; 'Lettuce not forget that . . .'; 'Lettuce not think that we are fighting the German people'; 'Lettuce thank God for Mr. . . .' *ad nauseam*) I should say, let us hope that it will not happen.

For in this war, luck or what you will has placed us beyond the danger of defeat; now, we could only defeat ourselves, by impaling ourselves upon a proffered sword, or by allowing our enemy to find mighty allies, and as to this second possibility, even Russia, after that fantastic debacle in Finland, looks less formidable.

Our enemy cannot defeat us — but his mighty army and air force are still intact, behind an impregnable West Wall. He longs for nothing more than that we should attack him — it would give him a last chance of victory. He will *not* attack us, in full force. Do not believe the people who told you he would do this in the autumn of 1939: who now tell you that he will do it in the spring of 1940; and who will tell you, if he does not do it then, that he will do it in the autumn of 1940. These voices are criminally suspect; they are the voices of armament rings rabid for their profits, they want to accustom you to the idea that there *must* be a big slaughter, somehow, somewhere, somewhen. Probably there will be, with so many ghouls around, but it will not help any save those ghouls.

For in this war, for us, the best form of attack is defence. Captain Liddell Hart foretold it all, long before the war broke out. The great blood-bath would not win the war; it would increase profits; there is just a hope that the war can be *ended* — not *won* — without it. For our best ally, our best hope of victory, is the enemy within Hitler's walls: the pinch of hunger, the enemies of his regime, the captive peoples, and, ultimately, the effect of attack from the *air*, which we should not defer a day longer than we can help.

Hitler will not attack us with all his strength. I know, from my years in Germany, that the Nazi strategy, laid down long before the war began, was only to launch that great-attack-with-everything-that-Germany-has if (1) France and Britain could be sundered from each other, and this has not happened; or, (2) if Germany could find allies strong enough to overcome them both together, and that has not happened.

Failing either of these, that Nazi strategy, long prepared, is to sit tight behind the West Wall and wait for Germany's enemies to come and take Hitler's ill-gotten gains from her, snapping up the while any unconsidered trifles that may be lying about. That is the meaning of the West Wall; that is why the West Wall was built; that is why Hitler calls it the West Wall — not the Siegfried Line.

Behind that West Wall stand a mighty army and air force, and a mighty nation as yet strong and united. I do not know whether they can be tamed without a great military defeat, but I think there is a chance of this after a long time, and after enough air-bombing.

I do not see how a great military defeat can be inflicted on them, even after a long time. They already know they cannot defeat us, have known this since the beginning of the war; but they think we cannot beat them. I think the best hope of *ending* this war, since our privations would in any case be less than theirs, is to tire, squeeze, bore and bomb them into compliance.

Such an ending to the war might be a *real* victory, for peace. In 1918 we had a military victory, but no peace. It is a fallacy to think that the more bloodshed there is, the better the outcome of the war will be. That is military theory as preached by the armament rings.

If the German-Russian agreement was for a series of alternating, westward-moving blows, to be merged in a joint grand-slam at a given moment, it has suffered dislocation through the Bolshevist debacle in Finland. But for that, Rumania would have been partitioned between Germany and Bolshevy by now, Germany getting the oil, and if the Bolshevists eventually succeed in Finland this scheme may conceivably be taken up. That would mean new conquests in South-Eastern Europe. But after the Finnish debacle, even a joint German-Russian grand offensive against Britain is hardly possible. Hitler's generals, now, would hesitate to carry it out, if he were to order it.

Two victors of this war already stand clear to see — the United States armament interests; and Italy. The Roman Umpire has given a masterly performance; never did a man sit a prettier fence than Mussolini. He had a hand in every warlike exploit as long as these were cheap, and acquired territory by them. They were not costly enough to imperil his popularity with his people; and when they threatened to become expensive and dangerous, he became, for his people, the Prince of Peace.

In the 1914-18 war Italy had a secret clause in her agreement with her ally, Austria-Hungary, that she should not take part in any war involving Britain, and that enabled her to keep out, and come in on the other side, as soon as the issue became clear, and reap the fruits of victory in territorial expansion.

She is not yet satisfied; she has a territorial grievance still outstanding from that war. This time, according to Count Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law, the secret understanding behind the alliance with Germany, made in May 1939, was that it should not involve Italy in a European war in less than three years' time. Again, she stands aside. Again, she watches intently the course of the struggle. Again, she will either intervene, to ensure her further aggrandizement, when she sees how the struggle is going; or she will at the peace conference stake a claim difficult to withstand.

So how do we stand? There are only two possibilities. Either powerful groups in Germany will unseat Hitler, within a year or so, and make a bargain with France and Britain, on the basis that 'Hitlerism' has been destroyed. Or we are in for a long, long, long siege of the West Wall, for the extension of the war in this and that direction without direct influence on its outcome, for the gradual exhaustion of the peoples, for the further spread of disillusionment, disbelief and desperation — in short, for deterioration and the achievement of those conditions in Europe which I described as 'Chinese' in the memorandum I wrote for my paper in 1936: odd dictators all over the place, holding pieces of territory by means of armed bands, like the robber barons of old, a militarist chaos.

The first of these two alternatives would be the better — if the men who succeeded Hitler were better, and more trustworthy than he. But only one method exists to find Germans better and more trustworthy, and that is to make them so.

In other words, we should be back where we were after the last war. We should make an arrangement with Germany and we should preconcert measures to be jointly taken against her if she broke her undertakings.

If we then were resolute, and kept to our word, and did not condone her repeated breaches of her undertakings, if we always maintained enough force to defeat any attempt of hers violently to repudiate them and were always ready to use it — then she would strictly observe them, to the letter and even to the dot on the i. If we began wrangling with the French, she would begin feeling her muscles and throwing her weight about again. We should have another war a few years later.

We are at the beginning of the year which will begin to show us which way the die will fall — and always remember that the armament rings do not want a short war. I want now to cast a glance at the two countries chiefly concerned, for me: England, where I was born, and Germany, which will be with us all until we die.

In England, we have taken up arms 'to defend Freedom'. Our own ancient liberties, however, have already been abolished, on paper, by one Home Secretary because 'the Irish Republican terrorists' recommended him to this, apparently; by another Home Secretary, because 'an anti-Semitic organization' instructed its members to 'make fun of the defence regulations' and 'a sudden attack on London' might then 'bring the Jews to their knees'. Not much about Germany and Hitler in all this.

But the liberties have gone — *on paper.* In practice, they exist, as yet, to a great degree. They could be abolished in practice at any moment, or by stages; and the reason given need not be any more worthy of belief than the two I have quoted.

Now, already, at the beginning of 1940, with the war only four months old, the 'manufacturers' of Britain, through their spokesman Sir Patrick Hannon, one of Mr. Chamberlain's most ardent admirers in the House of

Commons, who is President of the National Union of Manufacturers and therefore a Field Marshal in big business, drew attention to the 'grave danger of a so-called spiral being created between prices and wages levels'. *The Times*, similarly, wrote that 'the financial demands of the war may compel resort to a lower standard of living . . . what happened in the last war is a warning of what will happen again unless prevented. Wages soared to unprecedented heights but they never overtook prices, and the wage-earning classes as a whole were not placed in a better position. War sacrifices will have to be made . . .'

These arguments were directed against the possibility that the Mineworkers' Federation would demand a sliding-scale, wages-to-follow-prices, for the war period. I commend them to close attention. A 'spiral' is a dangerous thing. A 'spiral' is an attempt of wages to catch up with rising prices. But, as war has already shown that they do not succeed, they should not try it in this one — for this would represent 'a grave danger', and do not 'the financial demands of the war compel resort to a lower standard of living'? In other words prices should, may, must rise — but not wages. The wage-earners as a whole in the last war 'were not placed in a better position' when they obtained higher wages; obviously, in this war, they will be in a better position if they do not obtain higher wages.

Was ever a mean thought clothed in nobler words? Does not the contrast between this sort of thing and the battle of Montevideo hit you in the eye?

We are fighting 'for freedom', 'to end Hitlerism' —

over the North Sea, before the West Wall, in the South Atlantic. What are 'we' fighting for at home?

These quotations, and many other things I could say, suggest very strongly that the home-front-fighters are fighting to keep wages down. And what if the demand that wages should try and climb after prices, disgusting thought, becomes more clamant, if the workers, some of whom fought in the last war, some of whom are specifically in 'reserved occupations', think that the profit-takers, as well as the wage-takers, should 'resort to a lower standard of living', should make 'war sacrifices'? Is that what those special powers are lying on the table of the House of Commons for?

Remember that the sympathy of our rulers for National Socialist methods, now called Hitlerism — we are fighting to end it, by the way — was chiefly responsible for the we-are-in-two-minds policy that led to this war. Remember that the most vindictive enemies of the British working-classes are in England, nowhere else, and not always even among the moneyed-classes; did not a conscientious objector from Suburbia say that the British working classes were 'dirty, lazy, foolish and subnormal in physique and mentality', though he certainly added that 'the upper classes are ridiculous figures of egoism, snobbishness and irresponsibility'.

Now, if you are interested in cause and effect, in the sequence of events, turn to an official booklet, *The British Case*, written by Lord Lloyd. Lord Lloyd is Chairman of the Executive Committee of the British Council, a body which is said to promote British relations with foreign countries. Among other things it sends peers' daughters to display British fashions to the bewildered natives of Croatia, gives 'sherry parties' to Austrian Jews in London, and dispatches English-language-teachers to Rumania, where Jews of mixed cosmopolitan origins learn the language before coming to this country, and all this costs the British taxpayer, including the British working-man, £386,000 a year, according to the press. Lord Lloyd's booklet, *The British Case*, invites perusal, because its title promises the reader an answer to the oft-asked, never-answered question, 'What are we fighting for?'

Lord Lloyd (who as the head of a body dedicated to foreign affairs should be an expert on foreign affairs, but does not distinguish between the head of a foreign state and the head of its government and speaks of 'President Schuschnigg of Austria') says, twice and with emphasis, that 'we are not fighting for frontiers'. He is disillusioned with National Socialism, (sorry, 'Hitlerism'), but not with Fascism. This, he says, 'threatens neither religious nor economic freedom, nor the security of other European nations'. (Albania is in Europe, but Lord Lloyd does not bother with unconsidered trifles when he is making a case.) Lord Lloyd also states that 'the political machinery of Fascism is, indeed, built up on trade unionism', and so on.

Here you have the same old story, that was told to you for years about Hitlerism (sorry, it was then National Socialism). 'This great social experiment' — Sir Nevile Henderson, etc. etc.

I have quoted these things to show that the minds of some of Britain's rulers have not changed. The war came because they liked some things in Hitler's Germany so much that they simply could not bear the idea of being bad friends with her, and would not believe that nothing on earth could prevent Hitler's Germany, at the given moment, from turning on Britain. The things they particularly liked were the disciplining of the working-classes, the regimentation, the lowering of wages, the destruction of the trades unions, the enthronement of big business and dividends. They still have that idea enshrined in their hearts. Fascism? Ah, now, that's something like; Mussolini never made a pact with Russia.

So much for England, at the beginning of this war. On all the fighting-fronts, Britishers are doing their duty better than ever. On the home-front, the Government has in its pocket absolute powers; it can at any moment make itself 'totalitarian', to use the beastly jargon of our times; one more mysterious Irish Republican document like that produced by Sir Samuel Hoare, or mysterious anti-Jewish plot, like that produced by the equally diligent Sir John Anderson, would do the trick.

The warning, 'wages must not rise, though of course prices must', has already been uttered. The grisly contrast between the things the people are told, the things they think they are fighting for, and the truth, the use that is being made of their enthusiasm, their devotion, their lives, is as great as ever. The old, old men behind the scenes, grabbing with vulture-like hands.

The greater contains the lesser — and the class-war seemingly is greater than the Great War, of which this is the second instalment.

In this coming year we shall see whether the British

Government, in order to keep wages down, will exercise more and more of the dictatorial powers it has in a pigeonhole. I don't know whether this sort of thing can be successfully done in wartime. In peacetime, it is like falling off a log. But in war? It has not yet been tried.

I think it would be dangerous. Watch and see.

That is one side of the picture, England. And now for Germany.

Hitler, much sooner than I expected, is finished. The fairytale of Adolf in Plunderland may have a few more chapters yet, but its end is in sight. I cannot tell how long he will last, whether he will take an unconscionable time in departing, but his end is written clearly on the wall, and he put it there himself. It is an extraordinary thing, or rather, a thing for which no adequate adjective exists. The marriage with Moscow — without the wedding night. To make an honest woman of the Red Lady — and then not take the dowry? Some of the most powerful Reichswehr generals were always for military collaboration with Bolshevy — but collaboration without the military alliance, what in the name of duplicity is that? And then the Bolshevist military farce in Finland, where the Soviet Generals, chief among them the Jewish General Stern, made war as little Tommy makes war with his tin-soldiers in the nursery?

An amazing development — and, ultimately, the end of Hitler.

And, on top of that, the case of the *Graf Spee.* Adolf Hitler gave himself the name he will deserve in history — Adolf Scuttler. To order a great ship, with a good fighting chance, to sink herself in a Uruguayan harbour?

From that moment, Hitler is old news. Of our Calvary, no end is in sight, but among the gargoyles that flank it, we soon shall leave Hitler behind us. Assuming, that is, that if a Deal be made with Germany — a Fair Deal, of course, at a square deal table — our rulers do not make it with Hitler. But even I cannot imagine that.

Hitler is a yellowing page. Long enough he has absorbed our thoughts. The time is coming to consign himself to an upper shelf in the library, to look round for a book about his successor.

His successor will come either from inside or from outside Germany. If he is unseated by those powerful groups within Germany, the man will almost certainly be Göring. If he outlasts that danger, and is dethroned by some eruption of mass discontent in Germany, the man will come from outside. Then he may be Otto Strasser.

Consider Göring first. I wrote earlier that these developments are harder to forecast in wartime than in peacetime, because the factor of the bullet plays a large part, and bullets are incalculable; they ricochet, they strike at a tangent. But I would say that Göring's chance of being the next ruler of Germany is greater than any other man's.

In his self-commiserating mood, Hitler once, years ago, announced that he had already chosen his successor; he thought that a harmless polyp in his throat, afterwards removed, was an incurable, malignant growth. He did not then say that Göring was the man, but I hazarded the guess, in an article which nobody then found important enough to publish, though I was paid an exaggerated sum for it. At the outbreak of war, Hitler stated that Göring actually was Führer-Elect Number Two.

In making that choice, Hitler only forethwarted the inevitable and, probably foreseeing this, may have saved his own life, for by this move he made it possible, when the time comes, for him to be bowed-off and not bumped-off, by his successor. A chaotic, Communist Germany would be needed for himself to be able violently to remove Göring; but I cannot imagine Hitler himself remaining at the head of that Communist Germany, because too many Germans have been in concentration camps for seven years only because they are Communists.

A better picture of Göring is given by the Life of his first wife, Karin, than by any book about himself. That book contains letters written by Karin when Hitler was in prison, after the unsuccessful Putsch of 1923, and Göring was lying wounded, in exile at Innsbruck, and Hitler's triumph of ten years later seemed only a vision for lunatics, yet these letters show the most perfect faith in Hitler. Such loyalty alone, if loyalty meant anything to Hitler, would have predestined Göring to be his closest helper and his chosen successor — but that was not Hitler's motive.

But now Hitler, little though his Germans imagine yet, is preparing to go. He has no chance to remain. He cannot *win* the war; even if he were to turn on Bolshevy, none would trust him now. Plenty of people would like to do a deal with Germany on that basis — but not with Hitler, he might change his mind again a little later.

So, enter Göring. They always preferred him to Hitler, because he comes of the officer caste; his career was the army, his father was the first Governor of German South West Africa. They never really forgave Hitler his house-paintership, although they were glad to forget it until he made that pact with Bolshevy. How many of those influential people tried to get Göring to England, for instance; this, they thought, is a man very much like ourselves, with him we can do business.

Strange, you may think, if the war to end Hitlerism turned into a war to begin Göringism. Not in the least. It all boils down to the ism, in the end.

Just look at Göring's qualifications. As soon as he came to power, he put off the brown shirt and put on the Reichswehr or Air Force uniform; that puts him in the right drawer at once. Did he not so admire the British Air Attaché's mess-kit that he copied it for the evening-uniform of his own air officers? The man is clearly a gentleman. Or, as the disillusioned big landowners of Germany say, as they glance apprehensively over their shoulders at the Bolshevists, given them as their next-door-neighbours by Adolf (Save-us-from-Bolshevism) Hitler, 'Er ist doch wenigstens ein Herr'.

Now Göring advances upstage. *He* did not make the pact with Bolshevy (did he not tell the British Ambassador that none of them mattered a row of pins when the Führer was making a major decision). Perhaps *he* can get us out of the mess. What about levering Adolf out of his shoes and putting Hermann into them? And then, what about a reconciliation with Britain and France, ('Hitlerism' having been ended) and a common front against Russia?

Consider Göring's friends at court, at many courts.

He has been Mussolini's friend since his exile-days in Italy in 1924. Prince Philip of Hesse, who married the King of Italy's daughter, was a very close friend of his, and was given a high Prussian appointment by him. The former Kaiser liked him and invited him to Doorn. The former Crown Prince pinned on his coat the very Iron Cross he wears. The Princeling whom the Hohenzollern family sent into the National Socialist Party, on the off-chance of a catch in the slips, August Wilhelm, is his friend since many a long day. The Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Queen Victoria's grandson, Old Etonian and aristocratic showpiece of the National Socialist Party, is a very close friend; the Duchess of Coburg even travelled especially to Austria to be present at the birth of his sister's child. Wales-Edward-Windsor played trains with him on the marvellous model railway in the loft at Karinhall.

He has not spoiled his chances with any of these people. He might be a King-maker; a common-front-against-Bolshevy-maker.

Almost a miracle would be needed, as this war is developing, to prevent this man from becoming the next ruler of Germany. He is, in private life, the most jovial, back-slapping, friendly fellow you could wish for, who loves children, flowers, and animals, animals so much that he forbade vivisection, dancing bears, and fox-hunting with hounds. This last is the only serious objection to him, in British eyes; a man who does a thing like that, think the friends-of-man in Leicestershire, must have a cruel streak in him somewhere.

One or two other things about him are interesting. He is the father of the concentration camps. The author of the shoot-to-kill order to the Storm Troops. The man who had a Prussian general and his wife shot in their drawing-room on a fine Saturday afternoon in June. The man who fired the Reichstag and threatened to hang a Bulgarian communist exile for it. The man who, if and when Hitler goes, may have the German army and air force intact, and Hitler's territorial gains in his pocket. He would probably be glad to lead a crusade against Bolshevy — but not at the price of giving up what Hitler filched.

The loveliest picture of Göring that I have in my mind is of him sitting enthroned in the Speaker's Seat of the Reichstag on September 12th, 1932, the day when he was elected Speaker, and giving an unforgettable performance as The Grand Young Man of Parliamentary tradition and usage.

As soon as he had taken his Speaker's seat, the Communists, ostensibly the archest enemies of the Nazis, tabled a motion for the immediate quashing of the decrees by means of which Franz von Papen, Hindenburg's protégé, was then ruling the land. Papen confidently expected the Nazis to oppose this motion and sat smiling in the Chancellor's seat with the Reichstag dissolution order — he had obtained this in advance from Hindenburg in order to intimidate the Reichstag and be able to quell any outbursts — in its traditional red portfolio on the desk before him. But the Nazis, having telephoned quickly to Hitler, decided to let the motion go through, and before Papen knew where he was Göring had ordered a division and vote. Now Papen, who knew that a vote, if one were allowed to be taken, would make him the laughing stock of the world (the actual result was 512 votes against and 42 for him) jumped up and presented Göring with the dissolution order, so that the vote might be thwarted. Göring motioned him aside, and when the red portfolio was placed on his desk pushed it aside again. 'No, no', he said, 'the vote is now in progress, and must be completed. I am not interested in the contents of your red portfolio. To interfere with the vote now would be a breach of faith, a breach with all parliamentary tradition, why, good heavens, it would be unconstitutional!' The discomfited Papen had to withdraw and suffer ludicrous defeat in Parliament (afterwards, of course, the dissolution was declared legal). When he had gone Göring, with grave and honest mien, declared:

'I am firmly resolved to maintain both the prestige of Parliament and, above all, the right of this elected assembly of the German people to continue its work in accordance with the Constitution.'

Five months later he fired this same Reichstag.

So, from the point of view of the outer world, the rose that is Hermann Göring possibly has a few thorns. That will not prevent him from becoming the next ruler of Germany — if the change comes about fairly soon, and is the work of the same, powerful, big-business and big-estate groups which put Hitler into power.

But, if the change is delayed in coming, and the German people begin, like Vesuvius in a good sightseeing week, to show signs of simmering and boiling over, the man to follow Hitler will probably come from outside the country, he will be chosen from that group of men, now in the shadows of exile, who seem so obscure to-day, as Hitler seemed obscure only yesterday.

Then other men's names will come up, and foremost among them Otto Strasser's. For these reasons, because he may be important to us, because he may mean you, I began to think, in the summer of 1939, before war began, of writing a book about Göring and Otto Strasser. But then I thought, Göring has been written about nearly enough already, and anybody who still cherishes illusions about him is incurable anyway; I'll write about Otto Strasser.

So, when I came back to England, with the intention of writing a book, about this war and the next peace and Germany and Otto Strasser and the like, I went to a place on the south coast, and into a big hotel there.

It had an enormous apartment, called a Lounge, where a few people sat stiffly about in leather arm-chairs. In the middle was a glass-sided tank filled with water in which tropical fish swam bemusedly about, wondering, as I thought, what the devil they were doing in that galley, and from time to time one of the other occupants of the larger aquarium — for The Lounge was a chilly, greenish place, where invalid ladies and water-proofed gentlemen languidly swam in and out, so that you started when you found one near you — would occasionally approach this tank and contemplate its population, uttering faint sounds which might have expressed pleasure or surprise. I wondered what the other fish, inside the tank, thought of them.

There was an elderly gentleman of military bearing who knitted (Brig.-Gen., ret., late 1st Knitwits, I thought at random) and who was sometimes visited by his son, to whom he would snort complaints about things he had read in the paper ('Pampering these militiamen, I don't hold with it'. 'Yes, father'). There was an elderly lady who tottered from chair to chair and, between totters, nourished herself on the humour which *Punch* distils from that inexhaustible source of fun — the distinctions between the classes. Once a child came into The Lounge and was made much of by a Dutch lady, so that it began to laugh loudly; the elderly lady sent a waiter over with a reproof.

After a day or two, I swam out of The Lounge, which was unsympathetic to me.

So I took train and came, after a long walk on a very cold day, to my deserted village. The old lady with the gleaming eye was there, surrounded by her chickens and the wreck of the hamlet.

'Here I am,' I said. 'I'm coming in for a day or two.'

'Well, I didn't expect you back again, Master,' she said.

'Why not?' I asked, 'I said I was coming.'

'Well, I didn't think you'd come,' she said, 'this is a lonely place, and a cold place in winter, and I never had any visitors at this time before, and it's not very cheerful for you, with all these ruins.'

'It's the only unruined place in England,' I said. 'You haven't a radio, or a film-hell, or a fish-and-chip den, or a British Imperial Union Jack Corporation for the assembly of all-British gimcracks made by Polish Jews in New York; you haven't a Glamour Girl, or a Mayfair Man, or an air wardress; horoscopes, football pools and jitterbug dancing are unknown to you; cold it may be here, but think how much colder it is in Finland, or even in London at a full-dress rehearsal of a nude revue, and here you have no nude revues, and I saw enough of that racket in Free Germany and know what it means; you haven't a refugee, save myself, and I am the only real refugee in England; you haven't an Olde Antique Shoppe for the sale of mass-produced brass candlesticks from Birmingham; you haven't even a Tea Shoppe or a Pauper's Arms, where I should be sold warm whisky and cold port, if I were prepared to drink them standing, at certain hours of the day; you even speak English, which is a rare thing in this country; you haven't a Petrol-Station-and-Kozy-Kaffee combined; you haven't a crooner or a swing-singer, you need never listen to your own countrymen and countrywomen, in their blindness, singing 'Oh my bewdaful, yore so bewdaful'; your chickens don't even carry gasmasks; why, I never saw a place so unruined.'

'You talk queerly, Master,' she said, doubtfully, but her strange eye gleamed more indomitably than ever, 'there's enough ruins here, all round you.'

'Ah,' said I, 'you should see Chaucer's Canterbury and Drake's Plymouth.'

'Why?' she said, vaguely 'have they been bombing them?'

'No' said I. 'We have.'

'Oh,' she said, 'well, are you going to write your book here, Master?'

'Some of it, anyway,' I said, 'out of this very head. I'm bitten badly, by this book. I didn't know what to think about it when I left you, but now I'm all caught up in it, and I think Otto Strasser is a remarkable man, and a good German, and a man of peace, so lead the way, I want to work.'

And we went in.

APPENDIX I

THE BOOKS OF OTTO STRASSER

I WAS surprised to find, when I learned to know Otto Strasser better and discussed with him at length his life and work, that he is the author of many books, not one of which, as I believe, has been translated into English. Two or three I had read myself, when I was abroad, and assumed that they had long since appeared in this country, but I had no idea of the number of his works, nor can I understand to-day how a man of his many activities ever found time to write them. But I have mentioned, among the first of his attributes, his enormous and almost unbelievable energy, a thing not uncommon among Germans which he possessed in rare measure. Somehow he contrived, while campaigning up and down Germany for or against Hitler, while campaigning against Hitler in exile, while moving from place to place and from country to country in escape from the ever-pursuing Gestapo, to write dozens of books and pamphlets. He says he is the only author who does not know how many books he has written, and he may be right.

His *Structure of German Socialism* (*Aufbau des Deutschen Sozialismus*) I have mentioned in this book. I find it among the most striking essays in constructive political thought, elaborated in detail, that I have ever read; and at the end of it, overlooked by the great world of readers for so many years, lay the record of the two long conversations with Hitler which give so much insight into that man's mendacity and hysteria. This book was published in 1931.

Another of his political books was *European Federation* (*Europäische Föderation*) published in 1935; to-day, everybody speaks about European Federation, and this book alone would put Otto Strasser among the prophets. Then he wrote *The German St. Bartholomew's Night* (*Die Deutsche Bartholomäusnacht*) an account of the Hitlerist massacre of June 30th, 1934, in which his own brother Gregor, killed on that day, plays the leading part. I was particularly surprised to learn that this book was never translated into English, because that bloody day belongs to history and the comments upon it of a man so well acquainted with all the leading figures in the tragedy and so closely related to one of them as Otto Strasser must be invaluable to historians.

In 1938 (I am not giving these books in chronological order) he published, in Zürich, under the pseudonym D.G., *Erlebte Weltgeschichte*, which might be approximately translated as *World History in My Time*. This is a well-written and quite absorbing story of the events that began on June 28th, 1914, when the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was murdered at Serajevo, and continued by way of the World War to the triumph of Hitler, in 1933. Its last words are 'The Hitler system was born, which will shake Germany and Europe to their foundations'.

At one time and another came also *We seek Germany* (*Wir suchen Deutschland*), *Whither Hitler?* (*Wohin reibt Hitler?*), *Europe of To-morrow* (*Europa von Morgen*). The last of these is an interesting work, based on the ideals of T. G. Masaryk.

While he was still in Germany, and fighting against Hitler, Otto Strasser published another pseudonymous book, about his brother, called simply *Gregor Strasser* by 'Michael Geismeyer'. It was a delicate and difficult subject for him, because Gregor was still Hitler's chief lieutenant; he, Otto, was Hitler's chief antagonist. This played a part in a characteristic episode of those days. One day Otto Strasser appeared on the platform of the well-known Spichern Säle in Berlin in one of the famous debate-meetings which he introduced in Germany at that time. On this particular evening, his adversary was a Communist speaker, one of the weird alien 'intellectuals' who adorned the then German Communist Party, a 'Professor' Witfogel of the Lenin University. The Professor came off badly in this debate, before an audience consisting of three-fourths of uproarious Communists, and sought to turn the tables and discomfit Otto Strasser by asking him, suddenly, 'Are you the author of Michael Geismeyer's book on Gregor Strasser?' This was an unpleasant question for Otto Strasser, who had written the book from two motives: first, to earn some money, since Hitler's purchase and closure of his publishing house had bankrupted him; and secondly, by a skilful artifice to strengthen Gregor Strasser's position, and the Strasser cause generally, within the National Socialist Party. It was, in fact, a little piece of Black Front strategy. Professor Witfogel had learned of this and knew that if he could convict Otto Strasser of the authorship of the book its purchase would immediately be prohibited for National Socialists by Hitler, and Gregor Strasser's position in the party would be seriously shaken. After a brief hesitation, Otto Strasser answered: 'You know very well that if I answer yes to your question the book will be boycotted and my income from it cut off, and you know that it contains nothing that is different from what I have said to-night and have always said. So you wish only to injure me financially. Nevertheless, the answer is yes, I wrote the book, and you are a swine.'

The unexpected result of this encounter was that the 2000 people present broke into loud applause and Professor Witfogel was not allowed to continue the debate.

Apart from these books, which are all that he can remember, if not all that he has written, Otto Strasser in these crowded years wrote innumerable pamphlets, all in the sense of and about the topics I have touched on in this book with one strange exception, a pamphlet, which I have unfortunately been unable to procure, on the Revolution in Male Attire. He thinks the male clothing of to-day, and I agree, to have touched the lowest depths of ugliness, drabness, discomfort and unsuitability that man's dress has ever reached, and, while pursuing doggedly his ideal of a German Conservative Revolution, he even found time to advocate in print another revolution — that in the habiliments of the men of our time.

The thing that strikes me about his books, especially the *Erlebte Weltgeschichte*, is that he, writes very well, and I find it particularly strange, for this reason alone, that none of them appeared in England. Apart from that, he was, of course, in unique position to know Hitler and the other Nazi leaders, and all the other men who have played a leading part in Germany in the last twenty years, and had information about the inner truth of great events that was available to no other man. It is a curious comment on the state of the world's literature to-day that his books never reached a larger public, when scores of men who had no better sources of information than a file of newspaper cuttings were turning out the most sensational keyhole stuff about Hitler, Göring and the rest.

APPENDIX II

THE MILITARY SERVICE OF OTTO STRASSER

I HAVE been at pains to check Otto Strasser's military and civil history — his record of service, that is to say, during the Great War of 1914-18, and his activities in civilian life, particularly his political activities, in the years that followed it.

For one thing, I have a passion for facts. For another, I have usually found that a man's past record gives the best key to his character. For instance, if our rulers had been guided by this principle, and if they desired to do the best for their country, Britain, they could never have fallen into the absurd error of believing — if they really believed this, and I doubt it — that Adolf Hitler was a man good at heart but misunderstood, a man who, handled with indulgence, would prove to be an honest treaty-partner, a champion of peace, and a first violin in the sweetly harmonious concert of Europe.

His record is too bad for any British statesman to have believed that. There are far too many gaps in Hitler's record, and they can have no other explanation than that he has something to conceal. He has never given a single detail, that can be corroborated, of his doings in Vienna in the years before the war. Of his service in the war itself much less is known than would be known if all was well; it is significant that towards its end, when it was going badly, he was lying in a distant hospital suffering from some affliction, vaguely attributed to 'gas', which strongly recalls the familiar tactics of the malingerer in that war. The most sinister gap of all in Hitler's record is that which I have discussed at some length in this book — the absence of all explanation for his presence in Munich at a time when it was under Jewish-Communist rule and when all good anti-Reds were gathering afar off to expel this Red regime by force of arms.

The known things about Hitler are even more damning than these damning gaps, for the whole record of his political career, before he came to power and afterwards, has been one of pledges given in order to dupe others and broken immediately the end was attained, without a single exception.

Thus Hitler's record contained not one single thing that could justify any foreign statesman in trusting him, and the gaps in it were even more ominous than the things that were known. Close study of this man's past enabled many writers accurately to state what his future acts would be, and this is the enormous importance, to us, to you, to me, of knowing a man and his past.

The same thing applies exactly to Göring. In Göring's record there are no gaps whatever. Everything is known about him. Everything he has done is creditable — judged as the acts of a man whose lifelong ambition is to humble Britain and to put Germany at the head of the nations of the world. To that end, Göring will use any means whatever; he will stick at nothing. The Reichstag fire; the shoot-to-kill order to the police; the murder of hundreds of his fellow-Germans; the stupendous 'black', or secret, rearmament of Germany, blandly denied to every British and other foreign statesman until a long lead had been established; all these are the unmistakable signs and proofs of Göring's implacability, ruthlessness and lack of all scruple in pursuing the end which he considers patriotic.

If British statesmen a second time ignore these things, and dupe the British public by pretending that Göring, or another man like him, will become the friend of Britain if he be gently and 'tactfully' handled, more disasters await us. Göring's life is an open book compared with Hitler's; but his only law is Germany and Germany's domination in the world, and to that end the destruction of all, chief among them Britain, who stand in the way.

For these reasons I have gone in detail into Otto Strasser's record in this book, and have also described his service in the war of 1914-18. Here is no ambiguity, here are no gaps, any more than there are in the record of his political life after that war. Chapter and verse are contained in the *History of the First* (*Prince Regent Luitpold*) *Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment.* The fourth volume of this history, which was published by the Bavarian War Museum at Munich in 1931, covers the years 1911-20, and therefore includes the war we once called Great. Otto Strasser is one of the most oft-mentioned of the hundreds of officers who appear in its pages. I give below the chief extracts concerning him. The first relates to the last and greatest German offensive in that war, that of March 21st, 1918. It says:

'The 24th Bavarian Infantry Regiment took the enemy first line in thick fog. Its left battalion, the First, had been allotted the task of taking Urvillers from the south-east. Lieutenant Strasser was with it and devoted himself to his especial mission, which was to keep the infantry pressing forward hard behind the curtain of fire. At this point in the line, the method was successful. He found the first enemy trenches flattened out and the few survivors offered little resistance . . . Lieutenant Strasser and the scout officer of the First Battalion, Lieutenant Sailer (being held up in their advance by a British machine-gun nest), collected a few volunteers and with them pushed along a trench by means of which they were able to reach the British troops, whom they attacked with hand grenades. They captured the three machine-guns and their crews without loss . . . Lieutenant Strasser pushed on some hundreds of yards farther and suddenly saw to his left British guns in action. He decided to take these. He surprised the British artillerymen with a quick attack from the north — they were firing towards the east — and killed some of the gunners, who had been reinforced by some infantry. He made prisoners of the remainder, whom he gathered in a dug-out. Two British guns were thus put out of action . . . Lieutenant Strasser then rejoined the staff of the First Battalion which, with one company of the battalion, was in a captured British trench. Five hundred yards away they saw a British battery in action and Lieutenant Strasser offered to attack it with Lieutenant Sailer. Taking a platoon of men with him, he was able to cover the five hundred yards of open ground and to reach cover midway between two British guns. Four guns, two machine-guns and a complete brigade staff were captured in this engagement. Machine-gun fire hindered a further advance, and Lieutenant Strasser decided to turn one of the captured guns upon the machine-gunners. But as the British artillerymen had rendered their guns useless, two hours' work was needed to make one of them ready for action. Lieutenant Strasser then served this gun himself, shooting over open sights.

'Lieutenant Strasser was nominated for the Max Josef Military Order for his work on this day.'

This was the first big engagement in which Otto Strasser took part as an officer (he received his commission towards the end of 1917).

By August the German advance had ceased, American troops were pouring into France, and the German armies were on the defensive. On August 9th the great Allied counter-offensive (which ultimately led to the German collapse and the alleged end of the war) began. Of this day the *History of the First Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment* says:

'The news of the British attack east of Amiens made a deep impression on us. Lieutenant Strasser, who was carrying on in spite of severe sciatica, at this time wrote in his diary: "When I think of the feeling at home and of the condition of our infantry, I am filled with anxiety, the deepest anxiety. If only the whole army were like the artillery and particularly the artillery officers — ah, then!" '

On August 20th, 1918, the German line began to break and the German retreat began. The *History* describes how Otto Strasser saved his guns:

'When the advancing enemy was only eight hundred yards distant, Lieutenant Strasser ordered the withdrawal of all his guns save one, and sent an orderly with an appeal for limbers to get this gun away. He took command and fired all his remaining ammunition at the advancing French Colonial troops. At 6.15 p.m. he removed essential parts from the gun and ordered all his men save two bombardiers to retreat, giving one of them a message to say that the limbers must be sent at the gallop. He then went to a point on the road to await the coming of the limber, and saw there three Prussian guns which were bound to fall into the enemy's hands. Lieutenant Hieber, whom he had left in command of the gun, then arrived to report that masses of black troops had captured the battery position vacated by the other guns, and were advancing on the last gun. At this moment the limbers appeared at the gallop. They had already passed the last of the retreating infantry, who had tried to prevent them from coming on, saying that they would only fall into the hands of the French. Lieutenant Strasser succeeded in harnessing six-horse teams to two of the Prussian guns and then went to help Lieutenant Hieber rescue the last of his own guns. The enemy was now within bombing range. The noise of the explosions alarmed both men and horses, and escape seemed impossible. Lieutenant Hieber says: "I attribute our success in saving the gun at the last moment to the coolness and courage of Lieutenant Strasser, who called to the men: 'Steady, don't hurry. Just let them go on throwing their bombs', so that in the end all four guns, his own and the three Prussian guns, were saved".

Lieutenant Strasser was the last man to leave the battery position, and came away cursing the French'.

Strasser, says the regimental history, was for his work on this day nominated a second time for the Max Josef Military Order. (He had been wounded, incidentally, on June 6th, but not seriously and did not leave his battery.)

APPENDIX III

THE COLONIAL PLAN OF OTTO STRASSER

THE thing that has particularly impressed me about Otto Strasser's proposals for the reorganization of Germany is that they do not belong to the legion of such schemes hatched, or half-hatched, since this war began in September 1939. Since that happened, all sorts of people, among them many who earlier denied that the war would come, that Hitler would invade Austria, or Czechoslovakia, or Poland, and particularly that he would ever join hands with Bolshevy, have begun to offer *their* plans for the re-mapping of Germany and Europe after the war. The history of all their past pronouncements, if anybody remembered it, would show how ill-qualified they are to win a new peace, for they are the people who lost the last one.

Otto Strasser's chief proposal — the preservation of Germany but the dismemberment of Prussia — was made before this war began, before Hitler began his swoops, before he even came to power. It was first made immediately after Otto Strasser's breach with Hitler, in 1930, and was published in 1931, and the fact that it has become to-day, in 1940, of such enormous political importance shows that he is a man of the most exceptional farsightedness and a master of his subject. That proposal is the most important thing in this book. It has to be considered in conjunction with his other, domestic, proposal for the expropriation of the great Prussian landowners. Strasser would ensure peace by destroying the forces *inside* Germany that recurrently and incorrigibly work for war, the forces that put Hitler in power and made this war.

It is the most striking proposal, and the most worthy of long examination, that I have seen, and puts him, as I believe, in the first rank of the political thinkers of our time, which can show barely a single statesman of quality, unless Mussolini is one. It entitles Strasser's whole political programme to earnest consideration, and gives weight to his ideas about colonies and Germany's title to colonial activity.

Otto Strasser's proposals about colonies also date from many years back and were published in January 1938. These proposals, and the arguments with which he supports them, deserve comparison, once more, with Hitler's record in the same matter.

Hitler, in *Mein Kampf* and for many years after the publication of that book, claimed to be an inveterate enemy of German colonial activity, on the ground that ambitions in this direction would bring Germany into antagonism with Britain, whose friendship was vital for her. This professed view about colonies was as mendacious as his hostility to Bolshevy and all his other avowed opinions; it was an attitude assumed to lull Britain into a sense of false security while German rearmament was being rushed forward, and our rulers inevitably succumbed to the blarney.

By the time of Munich, Hitler had got so far as to state his claim to colonies (to Mr. Chamberlain) and in the last years before the present war, indeed, this claim was an open and official one of Hitler's Germany. The Roman Umpire, too, proclaimed the right of Germany to a colonial empire in Africa in October 1937, and this nobly selfless act of brotherly love, which was better calculated than any other to cut off any possible German retreat to London, was one of the astutest of Mussolini's moves.

Otto Strasser was at that time in exile, and fighting Hitler, but he did not, for the sake of financial support in his campaign or of political backing in foreign countries, take the line of least resistance, attack Hitler for his falsehoods in the matter of colonies, and call on his followers to fight against any proposal for a German share in colonial activity. Instead, he put forward his own proposals, in these words:

'Nothing could be more unjust and senseless than to declare the present distribution of colonial territory unchangeable. German emigrants of the Left make themselves ridiculous when they emphatically declare themselves against Germany's colonial claims and thus make themselves the spokesmen of the British or French colonial empires. Mussolini's phrase about the "proletarian nations", the have-nots, and their antagonists the "capitalist nations", the haves, is simply the Marxist idea of class-warfare translated into terms of colonies. But the enemy of such class-distinctions must also be the enemy of such nation-distinctions. He cannot acknowledge that there are "privileged nations" with colonial territories ten, a hundred, or a thousand times as large as the mother country, while other countries pine in the confinement of their space and the meagreness of their raw-material sources. Who can deny that the high standard of living of the British and Dutch peoples, the sound basis of French and Belgian industry, in predominant measure rests on their wealth of colonies, while the low standard of living of Italy and Austria, the raw-material poverty of Switzerland and the Sudetenland is in large degree due to their lack of colonies? By what writ does Portugal, with a stationary population of six to seven million, dispose of a colonial empire of over two million square metres, or more than five times the area of Germany, while Poland, with an ever-growing population of thirty-eight millions, has no colonies?

'But' — adds Otto Strasser — 'this objective and just examination of the problem shows the monstrous mendacity of Hitler's colonial claims and their completely reactionary motive and aim, for he is not concerned about a useful solution of the whole problem, about justice, or about a new and better order among the nations. For him, the question is solely one of might, of a share in the booty. That achieved, his Germany would immediately rank itself with the haves and against the have-nots. So might a workman profess Socialist principles until he acquired property, and then with the utmost speed become a defender of the capitalist system against the other Socialists, thus proving that he was never a Socialist!

'The colonial problem cannot be solved by such means. The result would be but an eternal struggle for shares in the booty, while the prevailing order would undergo no change whatever. But it is not only a matter of a share of the booty. Only a fundamental change in the colonial system can lead to that durable settlement of the problem which is so important a condition of European pacification.

'How would the government of a new Germany, after Hitler, envisage such a new system, what would it strive for? The conception immediately arises of a joint colonial activity of all European states, especially the industrial states, that is, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Poland. This would remove from the problem those factors of prestige and might and rivalry which envenom it.'

(I ought to intervene at this point to mention that since Otto Strasser drew up his proposals for the colonial participation of European States, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland have been swallowed up by Hitler, and that even Otto Strasser's conception of a European peace would leave the industrial regions of the last two States, and probably all of Austria, within the Reich, so that a share in colonial activity based on industrial strength would work out very much to Germany's advantage. I also mentioned earlier in this book that I was not in agreement with Otto Strasser's proposals for Austria, the Sudeten-German area of what was Czechoslovakia, and that part of Poland which the Germans miscalled the Polish Corridor. I simply recorded his proposals.)

On the strength of these arguments, Otto Strasser proposes, as the practical means of ensuring a just distribution of colonial activity, the formation of a European Colonial Company, comprising all European states, with the exception of Britain, France, Italy, and Holland, which would be unlikely to join. The chief members, he wrote in January 1938, would thus be Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Hungary, Portugal, Austria, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian and Balkan States if they wished to join. They would participate in the Company in proportion to the size of their populations. The territory to be put at the disposal of this Company would be the former German territories in Africa, and the African colonies of Belgium and Portugal. The Company would be under the supervision of the League of Nations.

The former owners in the African territory thus administered by the European Colonial Company, proposes Otto Strasser, should receive from it annually a payment equal to the average of their earnings during the preceding ten years, this to be guaranteed by the League. All colonial services would be taken over by the Company, and would retain their pension and other rights. Flags and official languages would remain unchanged, but the Company's flag would be hoisted alongside, and bi-lingual speech (French and German) would be gradually introduced in all the Company's territory. New administrative staffs would be trained in colonial schools in the participating countries.

Such were the proposals for 'a just solution of the colonial problem' drawn up by Otto Strasser before Hitler's annexations had begun. To-day, regarded as 'just proposals', they are still attractive. Their practical possibility seems to have receded. They depend, for instance, on the readiness of Belgium and Portugal to place their great African empires under the administration of a 'European Colonial Company', and there is no likelihood of this unless some future peace conference develops in a way that now seems quite improbable. They depend, too, on the readiness of Britain to place the former German colonies in Africa under similar administration, and if Germany loses this war, or better said, if she does not contrive to win it, that seems less likely still. At one point — by abstention from his last adventure, the attack on Poland — Hitler could almost certainly have had some such concession in respect of the former German colonies in Africa; I have the strong impression that that card was always held far up the sleeve of our governments. But now?

To-day, these proposals even seem too kind to Germany, which has given the world cause only for ill-will, and none whatever for good will, since March 1938, ten weeks after Otto Strasser drew up this plan. At the time they were written, they were certainly reasonable, and who would say that they were not just? To-day, they remain to throw another light on the mind of a man who may yet play an important part in German affairs.

APPENDIX IV

THE TWENTY-FIVE POINTS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

In order that the theme of this book, the dispute between Otto Strasser and Hitler, may be better understood I give here the 'Twenty-Five Points' — the programme of the National Socialist Party. This programme was already in existence when Hitler, acting as police-spy and agent of Röhm, discovered the little National Socialist Party in Munich in 1919. Afterwards, when he had ousted the first leaders of the party by means of the money with which Röhm supplied him, and had himself become its leader, the 'Twenty-Five Points' were proclaimed as the official programme of the party at its first large meeting, on February 25th, 1920, at the Hofbräuhaus in Munich. At the first congress of the party, on May 22nd, 1920, they were declared to be 'unalterable'. They thus represent the programme which was offered to the electors and show what the millions who voted for Hitler wanted.

The first ten and the last eight of the 'Twenty-Five Points' represent the *national*, or patriotic, part of National Socialism; to understand them, it should be borne in mind that Germany was at that time a chaotic land, groping in the dark aftermath of defeat; that an enormous number of alien immigrants, chiefly Jews, similar to that which has appeared in England and the British Empire in recent years, had come to Germany, swamped many trades and professions, made itself prominent in politics and dominant in the press, and was prospering while the German masses were nearly starving; and that many Germans detested these conditions and hoped against hope to remedy them.

The first ten Points were:

1. We demand the union of all Germans, on the basis of the right of the self-determination of peoples, to form a Great Germany. [This demand was far more than fulfilled by force, and not in virtue of self-determination, by the invasions of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland.]

2. We demand equality of rights for the German people in its

dealings with other nations, and abolition of the peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain. [This demand was fulfilled in respect of the Treaty of Versailles, which Germany repudiated, while her equality of rights was established by the passive acquiescence of others in this repudiation.]

3. We demand land and territory [colonies] for the nourishment of our people and for settling our surplus population.

4. None but members of the nation may be citizens of the State. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the nation. [This demand was fulfilled by the laws restricting the activities of Jews.]

5. Anyone who is not a citizen of the State may live in Germany only as a guest and must be regarded as being subject to the alien laws.

6. The right of voting on leadership and legislation is to be enjoyed by the citizens of the State alone. We demand therefore that all official appointments, of whatever kind, whether in the Reich, the provinces, or the small communities, shall be granted to citizens of the State alone. We oppose the corrupt parliamentary custom of the State, of filling posts merely with a view to party considerations, and without reference to character or capacity.

7. We demand that the State shall make it its first duty to promote the industry and livelihood of the citizens of the State. If it is not possible to nourish the entire population of the State, foreign nationals (non-citizens of the State) must be excluded from the Reich.

8. All further non-German immigration must be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who entered Germany after August 2nd, 1914, shall be required forthwith to depart from the Reich. [The first part of this demand was fulfilled, the second part was not, although scores of thousands of the detested immigrants had actually come to Germany since 1914.]

9. All citizens of the State shall possess equal rights and duties.

10. It must be the first duty of every citizen of the State to perform mental or physical work. The activities of the individual must not clash with the interests of the whole, but must proceed within the framework of the community and must be for the general good.

At this point begin the vital seven Points, numbers 11 to 17, which comprise the *Socialist* part of National Socialism and, with the *patriotic* part, gave the Party its dual appeal to the electors. Without these socialist clauses, the party could never have attained power. They were taken over by Hitler precisely for that reason; his long debate with Otto Strasser, recorded in this book, shows that he never regarded them seriously. But Otto Strasser, and many more of his followers, did take them seriously. These were the parts of the programme which irresistibly appealed to that social *Sehnsucht* in the German people of which I have written at length. Not one of these Socialist promises was fulfilled. They were:

11. We demand the abolition of incomes not earned by work. [No step whatever in this direction was ever taken.]

12. In view of the enormous sacrifice of life and property demanded of a nation by every war, personal enrichment through war must be regarded as a crime against the nation. We demand therefore the ruthless confiscation of all war profits. [No action of this kind was taken; the armament-makers in Germany to-day, and during this present war, thrive as freely as those in other lands.]

13. We demand the nationalization of all jointly-owned concerns. [Nothing to this effect was ever done.]

14. We demand that there shall be profit-sharing in the great industries. [No measure to this end was ever enacted.]

15. We demand a generous development of provision for old age. [To the best of my recollection, no improvement was ever made in the old-age insurance or pensions schemes which existed when Hitler came to power.]

16. We demand the creation and maintenance of a healthy middle class, immediate communalization of wholesale warehouses, and their lease at a low rate to small traders, and that the most careful consideration shall be shown to all small purveyors to the State, the provincial administrations, or smaller communities. [This vision of multiple-stores, chain-stores and one-price-stores converted into small-tradesmen's bazaars particularly appealed to the hard-pressed small shopkeeper in the days of Hitler's fight for power and brought him much support from this class. No move to fulfil this promise was ever made.]

17. We demand a land-reform suitable to our national requirements, the passing of a law for the confiscation without compensation of land for communal purposes, the abolition of interest on

mortgages, and prohibition of all speculation in land. [This demand was really the most important and vital in the whole programme. 'Confiscation without compensation' was aimed directly at the great warmongering landlords of Prussia, many of them incurably insolvent. The aim was to settle a sturdy stock of peasant smallholders on those bankrupt acres. 'Abolition of interest on mortgages and prohibition of all speculation in land' was aimed at the Jewish banker and usurer in the other rural districts, whose slave the peasant had become. This is still, to-day, a burning issue in the whole German problem, as I have shown in the chapter about Otto Strasser's 'German Socialism'. Not only was nothing ever done to fulfil this Point of the programme, but it was actually discarded long before the Party came to power, for Hitler, as an equivalent for the financial subsidies he received from the lords of land and industry — one of them, Herr Thyssen, admitted to this in a statement he made after his flight from Germany not long ago — on April 13th, 1928, added a rider to the famous Point 17 which said: 'It is necessary to reply to the false interpretation on the part of our opponents of Point 17. Since the National Socialist Party admits the principle of private property, it is obvious that the expression "confiscation without compensation" refers merely to the creation of possible legal means of confiscating, when necessary, land illegally acquired, or not administered in accordance with the national welfare. It is therefore directed in the first instance against the Jewish companies which speculate in land.']

[No land-reform was made, no confiscation-law passed, mortgage-interest was not abolished, nor was speculation in land made impossible. On the contrary, the great landowners were chief among the powers behind the scenes which made Hitler dictator.]

This comparison between Hitler's preaching and practice in the social section of his programme is necessary for the understanding of this book and of the German situation as it will take shape in the later stages of the present war.

The remaining eight Points are less important. They are:

18. We demand ruthless war upon all those whose activities are injurious to the common interest. Common criminals against the nation, usurers, profiteers, etc., must be punished with death, whatever their creed or race. [No 'profiteers or usurers' have ever been punished with death in Hitler's Germany, to the best of my knowledge, and very few of them have been punished at all, only a

showpiece here and there for propagandist purposes. The only people who have been put to death were those who were charged with treason in one form or another — that is, with endangering the secrecy of Germany's rearmament.]

19. We demand that the Roman Law, which serves the materialistic world order, shall be replaced by a German common law.

20. With the aim of opening to every capable and industrious German the possibility of higher education and consequent advancement to leading positions, the State must consider a thorough reconstruction of our national system of education. The curriculum of all educational establishments must be brought into line with the requirements of practical life. Directly the mind begins to develop, the schools must aim at teaching the pupil to understand the idea of the State. We demand the education of specially gifted children of poor parents, whatever their class or occupation, at the expense of the State. [Nothing was done to fulfil the first and last sentences of this Point.]

21. The State must apply itself to raising the standard of health in the nation by protecting mothers and infants, prohibiting child labour and increasing bodily efficiency by legally obligatory gymnastics and sports, and by extensive support of clubs engaged in the physical training of the young. [Germany, under all regimes, is among the leading States of the world in these matters, and very much was done after Hitler came to power to fulfil the second part of this claim, but chiefly from the motive of militarization and war.]

22. We demand the abolition of mercenary troops and the formation of a national army. [This Point has been completely, unreservedly, exuberantly, and enthusiastically fulfilled, and more than fulfilled. The history of German high-speed rearmament is a whole encyclopaedia in itself.]

23. We demand legal warfare against conscious political lies and their dissemination in the press. In order to facilitate the creation of a German national press we demand: (a) that all editors of, and contributors to, newspapers employing the German language must be members of the nation; (b) that special permission from the State shall be necessary before non-German newspapers may appear, these not necessarily to be printed in the German language; (c) that non-Germans shall be prohibited by law from participating financially in or influencing German newspapers, and that the

penalty for contravention of the law shall be the suppression of any such newspaper, and immediate deportation of the non-German involved. It must be forbidden to publish newspapers which do not conduce to the national welfare. We demand the legal prosecution of all tendencies in art and literature of a kind likely to disintegrate our life as a nation, and the suppression of institutions which militate against the above-mentioned requirements. [Readers may judge for themselves how far falsehood was expelled from, and truth enthroned in, the German press by the regime of Goebbels. As for the last sentence of this Point, a good deal that was necessary and healthy was accomplished through elimination of alien and meretricious influences.]

24. We demand liberty for all religious denominations in the State, so far as they are not a danger to it and do not militate against the morality and moral sense of the German race. The Party, as such, stands for positive Christianity, but does not bind itself in the matter of creed to any particular confession. It combats the Jewish-materialist spirit *within* and *without* us, and is convinced that our nation can achieve permanent health from within only on the principle that the welfare of all comes before the welfare of the individual.

25. That all the foregoing requirements may be realized, we demand the creation of a strong central power of the Reich. Unconditional authority of the politically central parliament over the entire Reich and its organization in general. The formation of Diets and vocational chambers for the purpose of executing the general laws promulgated by the Reich in the various States of the Confederation. The leaders of the Party swear to proceed regardless of consequences — if necessary at the sacrifice of their lives — towards the fulfilment of the foregoing Points.

[Of this last Point, I need only say that the demand for a strong central power was most amply fulfilled, and that the leaders of National Socialism have not proceeded regardless of consequences to the fulfilment of any of the Points other than numbers 1, 2, 4, 22, and 25, while none of them has yet found it necessary to sacrifice his life — unless Ernst Röhm or Gregor Strasser were among those present at the meetings of February 25th and May 22nd, 1920, and I have not been able to ascertain this. If they were, they have kept their word, though not quite in the way they expected.

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